

## midnight lover, so strange, so new by homosexualbyers

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**Relationships:** Dustin Henderson & Lucas Sinclair & Mike Wheeler, Jonathan Byers & Joyce Byers & Will Byers, Jonathan Byers & Will Byers, Joyce Byers & Will Byers, Mike Wheeler & Nancy Wheeler, Will Byers & Dustin Henderson & Lucas Sinclair & Mike Wheeler, Will Byers & Eleven | Jane Hopper, Will Byers & Mike Wheeler & Dustin Henderson & Lucas Sinclair & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

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**Summary:**

— me and you in this body bag built for two, i may be walking into the unknown but at least with you, i'm not alone.

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Will Byers is the son of a Vampire Lord. He thinks he's got everything under control until mysterious circumstances turn his life on it's head and he falls into the hands of Mike Wheeler, Vampire Hunter. What can true love mean for two people from very different opposing worlds?

## 1. Chapter 1

There were many things that Will Byers' curse deprived him of but he always thought eating was one of the worst. Of course he could still eat, his condition didn't stop him from moving his mouth and swallowing but as soon as even the most sugary buns or pastries were bitten they turned into bland mush in his mouth like he'd swallowed a mouthful of dust. He could taste nothing, no matter how sweet a baker made his treats or how many spices a chef doused his meat in Will could taste none of it.

Food didn't even satisfy the aching hunger in his stomach no matter how much foul mush he shoved down his throat. Nothing would work. Except one thing. The only taste he could bring to his cold lips, the only thing that could satisfy the growl in his stomach was the blood of a human being. To Vampires blood was the one silencer of their hunger, it was all they needed to feed their immortality. And the taste... *oh, the taste!* Picture the sweetest softest cake you could imagine with all the sugary icing and sprinkles on top. That's the amount of flavour and satisfaction Vampires can get from blood. But to Will it was the most bittersweet taste in the world. It wasn't eating, that meant gaining pleasure from your food, savouring your favourite gourmet delicacies, guilt free. This was feeding, simply a necessity, a means to keep going everyday, it was inhumane and Will hated it.

His brother would laugh at him for that. Having such a distaste for something inhumane was ridiculous when they were vampires. They were horrid creatures of night which all mortal humans feared. By default they were inhumane. The brothers were a part of a clan of Vampires centred around a Court made up of some of the most feared of their kind. Their father, the Vampire Lord Alonzo, was the esteemed leader of the Court which made Jonathan and Will into royals amongst their Night Brothers and Sisters. They lived in the village of Selene situated at the bottom of a valley overlooked by an ancient Temple. The village was far out from any other settlements and no one dared venture into the valley out of fear of the folklore

surrounding the Temple and it's curse that was cast on the land below, something about an angered god who was betrayed by a servant long ago. It was luck their father said. Will joked that it wasn't just folklore that they were the curse, the Temple and this valley that he was trapped in that shielded him from the mortals was just a symbol of the bigger picture. His fellow Vampire brethren would call him foolish for believing that. To them it was a blessing, gifted to them by his father's blood which he oh so generously sank into their necks after they graciously begged for it. Will didn't think of him and his families immortality as a blessing. Their Vampirism was born into their veins from their ancestors, it was something they were just stuck with.

Truthfully, their home was the closest thing to a safe haven their people could hope to find. It was situated alongside a small enough trading road that no one would notice if a few wagons went missing every now and then and it offered the Vampires the ability to come and go as they pleased and therefore there was always a steady flow of thralls going into the Village. Perhaps the greatest attribute was that the home was so out of the way that no hunters had ventured into the Village of Selene for centuries and there had been no deaths in the family for nearly as long.

Until one day.

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Lord Alonzo's Longhouse was a vast hall encircled by the rest of the village, it was the meeting point for the Court's feeding every fortnight and was more than capable of housing them all. Will sat alone at the back of the hall on a raised platform on top of a smaller throne next to two mammoth thrones carved out of stone, they were

meant for his Mother and Father. In front of him was long wooden table encrusted with gold on the legs and beyond that were more basic tables placed in an arch, there sat the Court, their golden yellow empty eyes piercing forward at him and the candle lit chandelier hanging above shining in the polished leather of their armour. Behind them the rest of hall was in bedlam. The Night Siblings had been called below the high ceiling of the Longhouse on the night of the Court's feeding which was rare and that meant that there was a dire reason to call everyone together on such short notice. The Night Siblings were an unpredictable folk, they were made up of outsiders, some poor losers who had come to Lord Alonzo begging for immortality, others who had been cursed by a witch or taken an unlucky trip into a cave and met the teeth of a Vampire and now sought the safety and community the Village provided. The Night Siblings were in a state of disarray and passed confused babbles between each other whilst shooting angered glares at Will every passing minute his Father hadn't arrived to address them. The air in the room was reaching a boiling point which was fit to burst and being under the cold gaze of all his hungry immortal peers made Will feel queasy, he supposed if his heart beat at all it would be going really fast right now.

Joyce enters the hall from one of the bedrooms along the side of the room, a lilac purple dress floats to the floor over her small delicate pale white frame. She carries herself with a certain regal, mature grace almost dazzlingly the Court as she walks by. She sits down on the stone carved throne next to Will.

"Are you going to feed tonight, my prince?" Joyce asked her son, keeping eye contact with the Courts scowling faces.

Will smiles and slackens into the back of his chair at hearing her voices. He was growing increasingly nervous being in front of the Court alone and his Mother's presence calmed him and made him feel so much safer.

“Depends. Have you seen my brother?” Will asks.

Joyce lets out a quiet sigh. “We both know he won’t be.” She told him.

Jonathan liked to starve himself for weeks and weeks on end, it was partly an act of defiance and mostly because the longer you waited the richer the blood would taste and the fiercer the energy their kind would gain from it. Will often joined him in his starvation but his reasons were out of pure rebellion and distaste for the action.

However the way their Father felt about them both was different. Jonathan’s starving habits were a source of pride. Jonathan took his Vampirism and made do with it, he made it a part of his aesthetic and he savoured the ache for blood and the release he got from feeding. Lord Alonzo was proud of their families heritage and he thought the ways of the pure Vampire was the way to keep their Court going strong like they had been for centuries and they had their own morals which were above mortals, they didn’t have the need to worry about how wrong it would be to suck blood from the veins of another being. That was why he was ashamed of his other sons habits, Will was afraid of what feeding and embracing the night would make him.

The Court breaks their stare down of Joyce and Will when a door behind Joyce and Will creaked open, that was followed by the tap of feet upon wooden stairs along with a thud and groan. Excited chants rise in the room, the Night Siblings leaning forward intently in their seats. Jonathan walks around the platform, his sweaty brown fringe casted down over his dark circled eyes further brought out because of his ghastly white skin. But he was not what had caught the other

Vampires attention, getting them so worked up. It was the motionless, sickly green faced man he dragged behind him. Jonathan heaved the man over his shoulder and slammed it onto the royal table in front of the thrones to cheers from the crowd. It was a thrall. A poor little soul who had the misfortune of falling under the seduction of one of Lord Alonzo's Night Children. Thralls, once strong willed adventurers or maybe just common wagon drivers with a families of their own, were now reduced to a zombie like existence and served as a blood bank to the Clan for the rest of eternity. That's if one of Lord Alonzo's men didn't have a particularly bad day and want to kill something. The Longhouse was built over caverns of cells holding hundreds of them. More men came up the stairs, dropping more bodies in front of the Court. They came just in time, the Court was starting to get impatient.

Jonathan turned his back on the rest of the Clan and nodded to his Mother and winked at Will. Will stood to ask his brother what was going on. He was closest to Jonathan out of all his family. Will was often tense around his own home, feeling like he was constantly watched by his Father and expected to do something he couldn't. With Jon he could be at ease in a way he couldn't with many people and he loved and needed that comfortability here. It was freeing to be able to let himself completely hang out and ask whatever was on his mind. But now before Will could speak Jonathan silenced him and nodded to the side of the hall where their Father was walking in.

The Lord's presence commanded the Clan to be silent and every Vampire no matter how yellow their eyes (the signifier of hunger for their kind) stepped back from feeding. Alonzo stood on the platform and look down on his Court, fully gloating.

"Good Evening, my friends. I am grateful you all joined us tonight at such short notice." He addresses the audience. A few members of the Court narrowed their eyes at them, some of them were less than a fan of Will's Father's eccentrics. "Forgive my delay of feeding tonight, I

have dire news. The end of our time of peace in this valley is near. It's time for us to act."

"Not this nonsense again, Lonnie." One of the members of the Court, Diabolos, spoke up. He handled the Security around the perimeter of the village and he was always at odds with Lord Alonzo, Will thought because he was too absorbed in his point of view being the only one. Then so was his Father. The Court had become a definite dictatorship under Alonzo's rule. Big headed Vampires, it's common. Diabolos's brought up murmurs within the Clan now. There were a fair few who agreed with him.

Alonzo shook his head curtly. "I have seen it in the cards, Diabolos." He said, bleakly.

The murmurs only got louder.

Will looked at his Mother who was staring up at one spot on the ceiling, detached from the room. He looked to her for some kind of answers. His Mother had always assured him the valley was safe and would remain that way for eternity and Will believed her, if it worked for so long why would it change all of a sudden?

Alonzo observes the Clan slowly before landing on Deryk, his Steward and Advisor. Will knew the way his Father was looking at him and he thought that he'd probably run the other way if he was on the receiving end of it. It didn't surprise him to see Deryk squirm slightly in his seat.

Alonzo beckons his Steward forward. "Come up here, Deryk." He

says, .

Deryk swallowed the spit gavouring in his mouth and slowly stood from his chair at the Courts table. He was a short man who had come to the Clan at an old age. His Vampirism had made his frail bones stronger and more defined, yet he was still left wrinkled and with a swirl of thin grey hair on his head. Deryk was a weak willed man, he had come to them after catching a life threatening disease and showered Alonzo with all the gratifying stories he had heard of the Clan, he begged for him to save his life. He proved his loyalty to his Clan time and time again over the years and was able to rail in Alonzo's big ego in on many occasions. Stood beside the Lord on the platform it was made extremely apparent how inferior he looked compare Alonzo's hulking frame.

"Over the last few months there have been rumours of a clan of Vampire hunters on the rise in the holds of Hawkins." Alonzo announces. A hush of shocked whispers fills the room, Alonzo keeps looking at Deryk, appearing unphased.

Will's throat tightened. He had a fear of Vampire hunters ever since his Father had told him stories of them as a young child. But he had never thought of them as a reality until now.

"Naturally I knew a course of action needed to be taken then and there but when I met the Court my Steward here had other ideas." Alonzo continued. "Why don't you tell us, Deryk, what did you suggest for your Village to do with this menace?"

Deryk blinked profusely and his bottom lip visibly quivered. "I- I... Lord Alonzo, as you know the Clan has very successfully stayed hidden from the rest of the Kingdom for centuries now." He rushed



his words, like he felt he had limited time to speak.

“You told me to do nothing.” Alonzo scowled at Deryk then looked to the rest of the Clan and smiled rather menacingly. “You feared for your own pitiful life so you told your Village to remain defenceless. You told your Lord to tell his subjects nothing, to carry on like normal.”

Some of the Night Children had stood now, specifically the meatier men who were apart of the Guards who had balled their fist and their necks had tightened from baring their teeth. One had even put a hand on the sword strapped to his waist. Deryk’s eyes continued to widen in fear.

“For the sake of the community it is best to not bring attention-”

Deryk’s lifeless body collided into the Royal table alongside the thrall which caused an eruption of cheers and applause from the room. Deep, almost black, red blood was spilling from his neck and Will watched it flow along the table and pool in one corner, it dripped to the wooden platform below. Deryk’s mouth was caught frozen mid scream and his eyes were squeezed shut, he had only realised what was happening a moment too late.

“Deryk told the Court to do nothing, to hide here in Selene because he was scared.” Alonzo shouted, anger burning in his voice now. Deryk’s blood covered his teeth and some had fallen down to gather around his chin. Will wondered how easy it could be to snap his Father’s jaw off. Deryk had always been a good man and had faithfully advised the Court well since Will was born. He even cared for and hugged young crying Will when his Father wouldn’t. His death was an unnecessary waste. It took all of Will’s best acting skills

to keep his face neutral as he watched Alonzo stand proudly before his Clan.

“This Clan has always spread blood and fear wherever it has gone! Do you think this Court should recoil in the face of such adversities as mere mortals?” He asked.

There’s an echo of No’s around the hall.

“This Court will stretch it’s grip on this land and extinguish the flame of these so called hunters! We will not dwindle in fear!” Alonzo growls at the crowd, the golden hunger of his eyes becoming increasingly apparent.

The Clan’s chants turned to shouts and roars now.

“Do not worry, my Night children, now we have terminated the traitors amongst our midst I and our strongest Brethren will venture out into the world to find our answer. I have spoken with the Gods and know there is a power out there that will make this Clan insuperable. For now stay alert my brothers and sisters. Arm yourselves. Jonathan will take up training the less experienced men in swordsmanship starting tomorrow.”

Will sat forward in his chair and looked past Joyce at his brother who slowly met his eye and shot him a friendly smile. Of course he was involved. Jonathan had become rather wrapped up in the Court’s affairs as soon as he had come of age as a fully fledged Vampire and Will had seen increasingly less of his little brother. It was okay, the days of their kind were long and drawn out and doing the Court’s

bidding was a good way to keep occupied it just made the rift between the brothers wider and Will could enjoy his company less as Jonathan impressed their Father more and more and Will continued to disappoint him. Because of that it kind of upset Will, he felt like he should contribute to the Clan more and then maybe he would be kept more in the know about concerns of the Court, like he was actually an important member of the community. He knew there were such things as Vampire hunters before from the tales his Father told him when he was a child. They were men driven by their religious beliefs, what they thought the Gods were telling them they had to do. They often turned mad with their so called brand of justice that their view of the Vampire world became twisted and complete eradication of their kind was the only path they could travel on. Over the years their followers had diminished greatly and they had dispersed across the land however that didn't stop young Will being plagued with nightmares, he'd wake with a clench in his stomach like someone had gripped it with an iron fist, it was one of the only times he experienced true fear in his life and he would have to leave his coffin to make sure his family was safe.

"Now, we feast." Alonzo says, he is now calm and smiles softly towards the Clan. "Keeping this Clan strong is of uttermost importance, we will increase the number feeding nights from this night forward. Feed well, my Night children, and carry yourself swiftly and with power."

The room is immediately filled with the sinking of teeth and sound of ripping skin as the Vampires pounce onto the Thralls in front of them and suck right from their veins. The way they feed differs from Vampire to Vampire. Some of the newborns or more violent ones make a complete total mess of it, getting the red liquid all over their chins and trailing down onto their shirts, clearly the hunger getting them overexcited. Others like the Court find it easier and are able to slurp through throats like a straw, not wasting a single drop.

Will was still looking at Deryk's frozen face. The Steward's last words hung in his mind. *For the sake of the community it is best to not bring attention* . The Clan of Selene was small. Even though the Hunters were just starting out and were probably even smaller than the Clan, Will knew they would gain allies quickly. The general world view of the Vampire kind is less than favourable. Not that they didn't deserve that, they were tricky, snide and he didn't know of any Vampire that made a wholly good name for themselves. He worried if a war broke out between his clan and theirs regular town folk would be up in hysteria and men would soon flock to the Hunters to take up arms and do their part to protect their families from the Vampire menace, it would soon be Will's Clan against almost the whole Kingdom. The Clan had lived on just fine for centuries when they kept to themselves and didn't make any too daring kills, changing that now may just be foolish and put them under an unneeded microscope.

Worry floods Will's mind causing him to jump to worst case scenario to worst case scenario. Alonzo loved a challenge too much to listen to anyone else now, he believed the Clan deserved greatness beyond what was manageable for them. Will pictured burning huts, bloodied coffins, a pile of grotesque, twisted bodies which had been impaled with long stakes repeatedly, the pile grows larger and larger eventual his parents and brother joining them, a gaping black hole through his Mother's chest where her heart would be. The room starts to spin and tilt despite being sat down and Will feels his whole body clench up at the images, and thinks if it got any tighter, any more scared, he would surely snap. Just like that he was a scared, foolish child again.

He tried to relax his shoulders and looked at his parents sat beside him in the stone thrones, both cleanly feeding on the chest of the thrall, and past them Jonathan sat in a throne identical to his own, moody and not touching his food at all. Will blinked several times to make sure they were actually there and he wasn't still imagining things.

There's a rush of squeaks and a loud pop next to Will and a hand grips his shoulder, he shutters upwards and yelps and bares his teeth and arches his back, ready to leap. Jane giggles beside him and puts her fists up in a mocking fighting stance.

"By the gods, Jane!" Will snaps, relaxing and scowling at the clouds of bats avaperating around her (the telltale sign of a Vampire who had just teleported). He was jumpy as it is he didn't need people playing tricks on him.

Jane is Will's best friend. She had joined the Clan a mere 27 years ago, turned at the ripe old age of 17 by a group of newborns who had kept her locked in a cave and used her as a sex doll. However the dumb bastards clearly didn't know the extent of the strength of a newborn Vampire girl. She had broken the iron of her chains in the night and stormed through their den. The entire Clan's blood had painted the cave floor by morning. For the next few months after that Jane had run savage through the wilderness, feeding on whatever came into her path. But as life as a Vampire goes on the mindless killing becomes tiresome and some of your consciousness starts to return and with that comes a startling fear of yourself and what you can do. She caught wind of the Clan at Selene and came to the valley begging for guidance and family. When she arrived she was racked with nerves and had a low thirst tolerance, Will had helped ease her into life at the Village and trained her to be able to control her thirst between feeding nights. Their friendship sparked amongst the warm kindness and trust Will provided for her.

"Why so tense, hunter-bait?" Jane cackles, she ruffles Will's hair, her touch is cold against his skin.

Will widens his eyes at her, startled and mentality cursing her out. "Don't say that!" He snapped.

Jane cocks her eyebrow and her rosy pink lips spread into a teasing smile, he can see speckles of red on her teeth. "Tense are we?" She asked, humorously.

Will looked at her deadpan. Jane never got told the stories, she didn't have any reason to be scared.

She looks down to Will's untouched half of the thrall. "Are you feeding tonight or can we get going?" She asks.

Will sat back down and grabbed the thrall by it's ankle. Lifting the leg to his mouth he sunk his teeth in. A warm thick liquid spilled into his mouth and he scrunched his eyes shut tight immediately. The hot toxic sweetness burned his mouth and flooded to every inch of his body, slackening everything up and putting more force into his bones. His stomach churned and every part of his brain reminded him of what this was, who this was and he felt a sickening guilt fill his dead heart. He didn't care if he and Jonathan were meant to be starving themselves tonight. He need to replace this dark fear instilled in him with something else. Even if that was one of his least favourite feelings in the world.

Will let the leg go and straightened up. He opened his eyes which were now a startling soul piercing red with a small sharp black centre, the eyes of a monster. He felt a bit of warmth around his mouth and wiped it away. He grimaced at the blood smeared on his sleeve.

Jane chuckles. "Charming." She says, her matching red eyes meeting his. She communicates a sense of pity to Will at seeing the pain on the Vampire Prince's face.

“Let’s get out of here.” Will nodded towards the door, he hoped to get out of the room of feeding Vampires as soon as possible.

He had followed Jane down the steps of the platform and past the Courts table when he heard the pad of bare feet coming after them.

“Will. I need to speak to you for a moment.” His Mom calls after him. Will turns as she stops before him. Her hair has fallen in front of her red eyes. “Be inside before sunrise tonight, okay, pumpkin? We can’t risk being caught under the sun in these times.” She said, pleasure sounding in her voice as she looked over her son.

Will nodded and smiled at Joyce, her motherly worry for him setting a little ball of joy off inside of him. Despite them being more than able to take care of themselves and being near indestructible because of their nature she was still very protective and careful when looking after her boys.

The two walk from the hall and out of the front door into the cold dark night. All around them are tall wooden houses with torches lit along the path illuminating their dark frames eerily. In the distance they could easily pick out their destination, the Infant’s Shack lit under an orange glow and the small beings huddled closely on the doorstep.

The two Vampires are alone now under the night sky. Jane turns to her friend, clearly in deep thought. “What did you think of that?” She asked, nodding back to the hall.

Will shrugged. He couldn't stop thinking about it. The feeding had only soothed the way his body was reacting to the news, the nightmares were still there clawing away in the back of his mind. He didn't want to seem scared though, that wouldn't do.

"It was a little cryptic. There's definitely something he's hiding from us." Jane said.

"Definitely." And Will didn't like it one bit.

Jane nudged him in the arm, clearly sensing her friend's tension around the subject. "I'll race you." She challenges.

Will smirks. "You're on, new blood."

At a crack like lighting the two sped off down the empty streets of Selene. The race wasn't about competition to Will, it was a good way to let off some steam after a meal and keep his focus on something else and he had no chance winning against someone like Jane anyway. She was a fully fledged Vampire, had more strength, resilience and speed than Will had by far. Will would have to wait until he came of age to be able to even compare himself to her. Those born into the Vampire blood didn't reach the full extent of their power until their bodies grew into that of a human 18 year old which took a lot longer than you may think. It took 20 years or so for a Vampire to age one human year. Will had about 13 more years to go until he reached his full power and stopped aging forever. He better get a damn move on growing then, he thought, he didn't want to stay a shorty forever.



Will didn't mind his friend's clear superiority to him. To see her empower god like abilities was fascinating to him, Jane was a prime example of a strong woman who was a force to be reckoned with. He watched as she smiled with a sort of childish glint as the orange hue of the torches flew past them in a blur amongst the black, her light brown hair waving over her dulling red eyes. Soon he can only watch the back of her head as she speeds of towards the shack.

The blurs surrounding Will came into focus as he came to a stop, bringing into view the two story shabby building that the children of the Clan slept in. Sat on the wooden steps, waiting for Will and Jane's arrival, were the immortal children of Selene. They really were quite a picture of youthful, pale white beauty paralysed in time for eternity. Will thought they'd be the most perfect part of this grime Village if it wasn't for the horrors that plagued the children's lives. The tales you often heard of Vampires, the ones involving rivers of flowing blood, whole families, even cities, slaughtered in hellish bloodbaths, inhumane murder which gained the kind their devilish evil name, a lot of them were the cause of children turned at a prepubescent age. A childish nature coupled with such power and hunger created a bloodthirst like no other and had the children, in the midst of their confusion and fear, turning into wild beasts. The worst part came after they'd been brought back to Selene and over the course of 3 long years they eventually came down from the high of being turned and remember who they were and they had to be told what they had done and that they were now the very monsters who had haunted their nightmares.

As Will arrived Jane was sitting down amongst them and had produced the key for the chest they had all been patiently waiting around, from here Will could see new scratches etched around the silver lock. *The hungry little buggers.* Jane twisted the key and threw the lock aside, hissing when the metal burned her skin. She took out several small thin vials of blood and passed them around. Most of the children literally squealed in delight as they knocked the whole vial back in one quick motion.

Will hung back for a moment to watch them. He enjoyed being their carer more than anything. Besides the normality of having a steady job keeping days easier, out of everyone at the Village the children were the easiest to talk to and get along with, having not yet become concerned with the Clan's troubles and serving them, they were too unstable for it all. In ways Will related to them and loved them as if they were his own children. He didn't want them to turn sour like all the rest. Jane had jumped at the chance to join him in taking care of them. It turned out she had quite a way with children, she could give them the soft touch they needed as well as offering someone to relate to because of her tragic past. He imagined it was quite therapeutic for her as well.

"WILL!" Shouted one of the first boys Jane had passed a vial to. The boy ran at him.

"Klaus!" Will shouted back, he raised a hand which Klaus hit... hard. He winced and waved the hand in pain. "Ouch! That is a mean right hook you've got there!" He bit at his bottom lip. He made a mental note to talk to him about controlling his strength.

Klaus giggled gleefully and clutched at Will's waist. The boy was just a mere 7 years old when he had been turned by a misfortunate encounter on his way home from playing in the fields not too far from his family's hut. He had killed them all when he returned, turned their bodies inside out, when Alonzo's men had found him he was chewing on his Mother's intestines. Will had just started training to look after the kids when Klaus had started to regain his consciousness and had been in the room when he was told what he had done. Klaus had cried in Will's lap for hours and had only fallen asleep when Will had crawled into his coffin with him and soothed his back until he was all out of tears.

Will knelt down to Klaus' level and brushed some of his golden blond hair out of his face. "Did you drink it all up?" Will asked. He peered into the gold of Klaus' eyes, the eyes of children never changed to red upon feeding like the grown ups did so you could never tell if they'd fed or not. Klaus had the same distaste for feeding that Will did except Will would never let him starve himself. He wouldn't allow sweet innocent Klaus to succumb himself to the blood thirst starving brought on. Klaus didn't have a family now and Will had taken the duty of being there for him, he wouldn't let Klaus be left alone. *Okay* , he'd never admit it but he did have a favourite.

Klaus nodded and laced his fingers together down his front, he swayed curiously as he looked up at his mentor. "Why did everyone get summoned to the hall?" He asked, the child hoped his favourite adult would at least be honest with him.

Will bit his lip. This danger of the Hunters was something the whole Village should be aware of. Especially the children who were more vulnerable. But Will could still feel the prick of fear at his brain and knowing how weak willed most of the children were and he didn't want any of them to stay wide awake against the velvet of their coffins like he had done as a kid. They would be told at a later date, he couldn't face doing it right now whilst the images were still fresh in his brain.

"You need to not worry about that right now." Will told him, straightening the boy's woollen jacket. He thought his dead heart would ache at the disappointed frown falling on Klaus' face.

Suddenly, Will was tackled by arms wrapping around his neck from behind. He swayed then laughed and grabbed the legs from behind

him and wrapped them around his chest. “Wow, you’re getting big Annalise!” He said, standing and twirling the girl on his back around to her high pitched screams. She wasn’t getting big, she hadn’t grown at all in months. It was good to tell the newborns stuff like that, it made them feel more normal.

Annalise, 9, murdered half of the city including her parents and baby sister. She adjusted to her life in the Clan and had dealt with the responsibility of what she had done well. From what Will could tell her parents had been abusive and had constantly failed their two daughters. One morning a nervous and ghostly man showed up at the city’s stables with the Travelling Caravans and offered Annalise a power beyond her imagination, as much as she needed to get rid of them permanently. The man’s only price was an expensive family heirloom that hung in her Father’s store, a worthy prize for someone who had something to run from. So Annalise stole the heirloom and sold her soul away forever. And she got the job done alright... took it a little too far too.

She was a serial killer in the making and Jane and Will were working hastily to rein her in. It startled Will that a child that young, even a Vampire one, would have so little remorse for such a horrific act. In fact she didn’t feel anything about it at all. Jane however grew a sense of tender-heartedness for her. They formed a close sisterly bond, tangled in animosity and mutual bad blood.

Annalise tugged at Will’s hair and pulled herself up onto his shoulders. “Can you take us for a run, Will?” She shouted in his ear, shrilly.

“Can we, Will? Please!” Klaus frantically, tugging on Will’s sleeve.

Will beamed at them both and looked at Jane who was consoling one of the other kids on the steps. She nods and smiles lightly at him, signaling she'd be able to get on by herself for a while. Will took a very short breath of relief, this was just what he needed right now. He scooped Klaus up his arms and turned towards the road leading out of the Village. "Hold on." He teased the children who scoffed at him. With a snap Will sped off into the chilly, black night.

He ran miles in no time at all, past the guards at the border of the Village, through the forest and out across the barren wastelands of the valley. As he runs his hair blows throw the wind and the fine cotton of his shirt hugs his torso, he hears the children's breathless laughter mingled with short lived screams, he feels the rush of the cold air against his skin. It's freezing and uncomfortable as hell but he almost feels alive. It's one of the only physical feelings he can even slightly enjoy.

Will comes to a stop on the top of a hill on the perimeter of the valley. Before them Will and the kids could see twinkling lights along the roads of the world beyond the valley and a magnificent castle on a hill to the North, a glow cast around it which he knew was the nearest city. The land radiated movement and vibrance, and Will thought he would like to keep running, down onto the roads and up to the city gates, to walk through them and go to a tavern like the ones he's heard of in stories, he'd order himself a bottle of mead and listen to a bard play the drums whilst he chatted with his fellow men and asked if there were any good houses up to buy close to them. He would be amongst everyone living there and be care free. But then swords and foul shouting disturbed the scene and Will was reminded of how his heart didn't beat, his skin felt cold to touch and his teeth felt pointed and misplaced in his mouth and the lights and the castle, the tavern and the new life before him all felt like it was so far away. And he couldn't catch up with it.

"Are those the ones who want to kill us, Will?" Klaus asked. Of

course. Klaus was smart. He knew danger threatened the Clan.

Will looked down at the boy in his arms glumly. The boy's eyes had been full of wonder but now were full of concern. "Yes." Will said carefully. He put thought into his next words, not wanting to scare the kids. "And we will kill them."

Annalise laughed fearlessly, leaning forward on Will's head to get a proper look over the hill. Klaus just pulled Will close, as always getting up in a fluster about something. Will squeezed Klaus gently and rubbed a thumb into the back of his neck.

Will turned back to the valley which had such a vast different tone than the other side. Here it was like they were stood on the edge of a dark bottomless pit, even the lights from Selene are hidden away by the woods surrounding it, a pit with a long, painfully empty and slow fall with nothing that Will could grab onto to stop himself. Will felt a weird pull towards it and it ate away at his mind. To the right stood the Temple teetering on the edge and lit up by a blue hue, the edges of its roof forked into the sky. It guarded the edge, keeping anything from going out and pushing everything in. It was like a hole straight to hell.

## 2. Chapter 2

The coffin lid groaned open, the noise grating to Will's tired ears. Light crept into the dark space, making Will grimace and turn his head to hug into the cushion. A thin hand curled around his shoulder, his eyes snap wide open in a spark of panic.

"Will... sweetie. You need to get up. We have to go now." He heard his Mother's voice, she speaks softly as though not to make too much noise but too quickly to be a whisper.

Will shifts around in his coffin to look at her. Joyce was still in her white nightie and hadn't brushed her hair or put on her make up yet. (She always added a little extra colour to her lifeless cheeks.) "Is it nightfall?" He asked, confused. He never overslept. The same couldn't be said for most of his family.

"No."

Will sat up. "Why are we awake then?" He groaned. He liked his sleep.

His bedroom was dimly lit by the sunlight falling through his opened curtains. There was something else about the window, he squinted trying to get a better look. The glass was shaking in its frame. He looked to his Mother who was watching him, nerves filling her eyes and she nodded knowingly. Something was very wrong. Will's mind automatically jumped to the Hunters. But they couldn't have found them this soon, could they?

“What’s going on?” He asked her, holding his breath.

She didn’t speak, didn’t give him an answer but he soon got it from a muffled scream beyond the window. Will felt like he could fall back into the coffin again and padlock it shut forever. If last night would have made his heart beat faster then this feeling would’ve made it implode. It was just how his nightmares would start, he’d wake during the day to screams of people losing their lives from outside. His worst fear had come true. Someone was in the Village and they were hurting people.

Joyce helped him get his legs over the side of the coffin, took both of his arms to pull him to his feet and handed him his boots which he put on. Now Will could see Joyce properly he noticed she had strapped a long dagger around her waist over the top of her nightie and pulled her boots on. She looked as tired as he was, the bags coming under her eyes. His Mother was always beautiful he couldn’t remember the last time he’d seen her in such a state.

“When we get out there, Will, I need you to run and to not stop running until I tell you to, can you do that for me, Will?” Joyce asks, using that sugary and cautious Mother voice. She wraps his cloak around him and clasps it at his neck tight then pulls the hood up securely so it hides his face.

“Yes. I’ll stay close I promise.” He tells her.

She takes a sigh of relief. She needed to be able to keep the knowledge that her son would keep close to her at all times. An explosion nearby rocks the hall, making them both jump. They hear people running past the bedroom door. Joyce cups a cold hand around her son’s cheek which he leans into, the touch making them



both feel just a little at ease for a moment. She hushes her son, they both hold their breath and stand as still as they possibly can as more people run past the room. The footsteps and the screams are like thunder targeting at him. It's like Will has an alarm going off in his head, it's deafening and makes him painstakingly aware of how much his life and Joyce's could be on the line.

"It's going to be okay, my Prince. I love you so so much." Joyce whispers once the people have passed. She could see the fear on her son's face and she wanted all this to pass right now for her boy. She hated what this had come to and what she had to do. No Mother should ever have to lead her son towards such life changing trauma.

Joyce clasps Will's hand so tightly that if he pumped blood at all she would probably cut off the circulation, then they ran from the bedroom and through a narrow hallway of other doors. They passed Jonathan's and Will's parents rooms, Will caught a glimpse inside Jonathan's room at a wide open empty coffin and past that rising flames outside Jonathan's window which casted a flicker across the room and the colours reflect in Will's dark red eyes.

Will slowed his run. "Where are Father and Jonathan?" He said. The images of empty bloodied coffins flashed in front of his eyes, making him tense up. He watched the back of her head and waited for her to stop running and turn and tell him they were safe. But She doesn't. She just keeps running. "We have to find them." He tells her, it was obvious to him. He could never leave without them.

Joyce pulled him by his hand and quickened the movement of her feet. "There's no time for that. Remember what I said keep moving." She said, her tone pointed.

They started moving again. They couldn't be leaving them behind could they? He couldn't imagine why Joyce would leave them behind. Maybe Alonzo but not Jonathan. Unless they were already dead... No! Will couldn't think like that. So many people could be dead already.

A door swung open along the passage and a tall figure dressed in rusted iron armour barged out. He rose a long crossbow to the thin black slit in his helmet, just below a small symbol of a cross that wrapped around the metal, he rounded the weapon on them both. Joyce let go of Will's hand and lurched forward and pushed the crossbow upwards with both hands, the bolt let loose and thudded into the wooden ceiling above. The man grunted and tried to throw her off but she kept a firm grip.

"Will, Run! I'll catch up!" She gasped, out of breath and drawing her dagger to swing at him.

Will stood there unable to move, watching his Mother. Partly in terror, partly in awe at how his small, delicate Mother was holding her own against a Vampire hunter twice her size and had now dug her dagger into the man's skin between the plates of his armour, making the man growl in agony.

Will tore himself away from them and ran into the main hall. The Court's tables had been overturned towards the doors, a few gutted bodies wearing the colours of Selene lay on the ground behind them. Another one of the Hunters was slowly edging across the room, firing crossbow bolts rapidly, towards Diabolos who backed down the stairs to the caverns and shot a pale blue ice magic out of his hands and back at the attacker.

Will hid behind a post and tried to compose himself and straighten his mind out. There were already so many dead. He looked around the room and could see no more Hunters besides the one Diabolos was fighting, they must've all gone off into the rooms along the sides of the hall, so the way to the exit was clear. The platform Will had sat on the very night before now had corpses on it and there would be many more throughout the Village he imagined. All his Night Siblings murdered. Why would anyone do this? The Clan had lived peacefully for so long, far away from all civilisation. They never really bothered anyone, they just cared for and loved their own people. The safety and security of the Village was shattered.

Diabolos hits the Hunter with a well timed ice spike in the torso and it sends the man flying back a few feet, dead. Both Diabolos and Will scowl at the fallen man, both hating him with every fibre of their being at that moment. They then see each other. Diabolos has clearly been through the works already tonight, he looks at Will, full of woe and despair, then at his crumpled men. They were all men Will hardly knew, only recognising their faces but to Diabolos who had come here with nothing they were his family and now the Hunters had taken them from him. Will had never known the other Vampire all that well but in that moment seeing him at his lowest, submerged in grief and anguish his heart ached for him. Diabolos turned and ran into the caverns and Will had the feeling he'd never see him again for a long, long time.

Joyce appeared behind the boy, making him jump slightly. He turned to her and saw her dagger back in its sheath and blood speckled down the front of her nightie. She appeared unharmed which he was grateful for. Joyce looked around the hall for a moment, at the table her family had sat at for so many meals and at the fire her and her sons had danced in front of on countless occasions, that flames now smouldered out. She looked sad to see her home like this but she buried it away for the sake of her son and took his arm and they ran towards the door together.

Out in the Village streets Will looked up at the rising sun, the sky is a jade pink behind the black smoke rising from the ground, the sunlight made Will's skin sting and brought down a teeming, almost immobilising weight on his shoulders. Each and every home along the street had the middle of their wooden doors ripped open and bodies had been dragged out onto the streets, their pearl white skin disfigured and gushing red. Will was surrounded by an unbearable heat from bright orange flames licking through windows up above. Behind them he saw a Vampire woman kneeling in front of her house, she was the town's tailor, Marium. Will remembered her fitting him for all his cloaks and dress clothes, she often took his Mother out for walks when her and Father were fighting. He watched, frozen with complete horror, as a Hunter's iron gauntlet grabbed her by her hair to harshly pull her head back and took a silver bladed sword and sliced it across her throat, spraying blood through the summer light. She was cut off mid scream, the sound turned it into a hissing, gurgling noise. As if in slow motion she fell face first into the ground. Joyce put a hand on his back and turned him away, they kept running. He felt his head begin to spin again, seeing the Village he grew up in, the houses of his friends, the streets he had raced his brother down, be a place of such carnage and horror it was enough to make anyone reel with an inexplicable amount of pain. He felt as though he was in the middle of a spinning roulette of his worst nightmares come true.

A group of four of the Hunters came around the corner, each baring swords and axes, Joyce drew her dagger. The man heading the group swung at the pair and Joyce brought her blade up and clashed with the sword. Will stepped back, noticing something past the group. The fire consuming the building almost made it unrecognisable, Will just knew it because of the countless hours he spent there it was etched into his brain, the Infant's Shack. With a snap Will bolted around the group and sped towards the shack. This must've been one of the first places they attacked because the flames had now risen and consumed the roof, making a large chunk collapse and fall through to the bottom floor.

Jagged, yellow, fangs protrude along Will's gums and his fingernails, point out, knife-like, as he runs up the steps. He almost trips over a body, jumping back when he looked down. He'd recognise that black curly, beautiful hair anywhere. He crouches down and turns Annalise over with a careful hand, her whole chest is cut open haphazardly, the flesh is left mangled and mutilated, the grey of one of her collarbones peeks through all the black blood and flesh. It was revolting and he'd never seen anything as bloody and sickening, even from his own kind.

Will was also intoxicated with the smell, the smell of Vampire blood was foul, kind of like manure. The smell was tinged with the scent of ash, obviously some of them had burned to death upstairs as well. Looking about the porch of the Shack he was surrounded by bodies of more children who fell under his care, each motionless. Tears blurred over his vision and Will blinked profusely, trying his hardest to keep them in. If only he had been there, if he slept beside the children in their shack every night instead of his stupid, nonsensically lavish Royal family hall which was more like a fortress than anything. Maybe he could've got them out, spared at least a few of them, shielding by all the other houses of the town.

His Mother's hand gripped Will's shoulder sensitive for a moment then tried to pull him up. "Will, we have to keep moving!" She shouted, but her voice sounded like it was a thousand miles away to Will who's had a too loud buzz of confusion and terror going on in his head.

"We have to help the survivors, Mother! It's my job!" Will yells, trying to be louder than all the noise going on in his head. "It's my job... it was my job to protect them." He repeated, losing his voice towards the end growing quieter and turning into a sad whine.

“Will, sweetheart, that’s very noble of you but there are more important things at stake here. We don’t have time, we have to go.” Joyce explained, leaning close enough so Will could hear.

*How could she say that?* Will thought. The lives of children, Will’s best friend, the people he grew up with, *his family* were at stake here. What higher cause would be more important than the people of his Village? Why were their lives more valuable than others?

Will looked up into the Shack. Another one of the giant grey men was stood inside with his back faced away from him, the man was reloading his crossbow and edging towards someone on the back wall. Will squinted at him, struggling to see because of the tears filling his eyes and the brightness and heat of the flames eating their way through the building. He saw a head of golden blond hair and a pale crying face, tinted orange in the light. It was Klaus. All Will’s horror and confusion at this terrible day then turned into a untameable anger. If no one else was going to save Klaus, he would. He may not have been able to save anyone else or kill any of the others but he’d take this one down even if it was the last thing he did.

The man was taking aim, he had to move quick. Will stood, tugging his arm out of his Mother’s grip and took the dagger from her. He was the one who had to do this. It was his job to protect Klaus, his job to protect them all. Will squeezed his body gap in the wall the Hunter’s had kicked in. With all the strength and precision he could muster he threw the dagger across shack, hitting the man square in the back but rebounding off his armour. No damage. And now he knew they were there. The man still staggered to the side, away from Klaus and Will felt a brief moment of triumph. He pushed his way through the crack in the wall and ran across the shack, Joyce following and charging at the Hunter and barging him back.

Will's stomach tensed when he got closer to the fallen boy. There was a thin bolt stuck into Klaus' chest, Will had been a moment late. Will kneels and pulls the boy into his lap and tugs out the bolt, making the boy whimper in pain and his blood splatter everywhere. Klaus' chest heaves and his eyes flutter open and closed, going in and out of consciousness. A single, thin stream of black runs from his lips.

"I'm here, Klaus. Klaus, I'm right here. You're okay." Will says, his words shaking their way out of his mouth, he prayed they weren't lies.

"Will... they killed us..." Klaus wheezes, almost unheard over the crackle of the fire around them. His red eyes were softened in the light of the shack, twinkling in a dreamy, earthly way as he looked up at his mentor.

"You have to get up right now. Stand up, I can get you out of here." Will tried to put on a firm, authoritative voice but his breath rattled, failing him.

Klaus' eyes shuttered one final time then closed. The immortal boy blacked out.

Will took a long, panicked breath. "You're doing so well, Klaus, you're such a good boy, do you hear me?" He trembled, holding the child's face and wiping the blood from his chin. "You have to get up... my beautiful boy." Will's voice cracked as Klaus went limp in his hands. He wailed and shook his head over and over. He couldn't. Klaus couldn't die. He was the one person he was going to save.

Tears ran down Will's cheek, he wipes them away only getting Klaus' biting cold blood smeared over his face. Will was the closest thing to a Father Klaus had until the end and even then Will couldn't save him. All the children were dead. His Village too. Now Will felt like he had lost the only meaning he could ever find for his long tiresome life.

Joyce put her arms around her son and helped him up to his feet and lead him from the shack, leaving Klaus lying motionless on the ground with his now dead killer. The rest was like a dream to Will, like he watched it all happen as a third party observer now being numb and feeling ridiculously useless. They turned around the side of the Shack and to the treeline fencing the perimeter of the Village and dived into the woodery, soon hearing the break of branches and rustle of leaves signifying Hunter's had come in after them. Joyce pushed her son ahead of her to make sure he was as far out of the range of the Hunter's crossbows as possible. Eventually they reach the other side of the woods and past all the greenery they find a roughy build hut. Inside Will is put on a horse and his arms are wrapped around his Mother's waist and they galloped away from the woods, leaving the Hunters far behind.

On the top of the valley Will looked back at his home. The fire had spread to the woods around Selene, engulfing the whole area in flames and making it into one angered orange ball. Will glowered down at it. The Hunters had no right to come here. The Village of Selene was a sanctuary for the outcast, the people who had lost everything they had because of a horrid curse that was thrust upon them, they never pillaged, or murdered or stole or tricked. They simply lived their lives, crawling from each day to the next. If that made them monsters who needed to be sought out and brutally murdered in this way that was simply evil, more evil than his Clan had ever been. Will knew his Father was right now more than ever. Their kind needed to fight for their freedom whatever it takes.



Will couldn't sleep for hours after having left Selene behind them, no matter how much he hugged into his Mother's back to shield himself from the tireless pang of the sun. It wasn't just nightmares flashing before Will's eyes now, it was memories, real life and that drew Will's fear even deeper. It didn't even occur to him to savour his first look at the world beyond Selene as Joyce rode them across Hawkins, through green moors filled with life and past tall endearing castles and towns that represented everything Will daydreamed of on the edge of the valley just the night before. Those dreams seemed false now, foolish and child-like and he didn't know why he wasted so much time on them. He felt very arrogant and spoilt now he was only just recognising the family and undeniable love he had at Selene now it had been taken from him.

He stayed awake and his mind drifted to Jonathan and his Father, to Jane. He tried to guess where they were now and worked hard to remember if he'd seen their faces as they fled the Village. He tried to piece together why they hadn't even looked for them but he couldn't think of any reason. Before now he thought his Mother would do anything to protect their family and that she would always share everything with her son. But now he felt like his Mother was keeping something from him and whatever it was was more important than the lives of all their loved ones. He didn't feel like he knew her all that well anymore. He couldn't understand any of it.

They reached the peak of a snowy mountain and finally stopped at a old rickety stone tower as night fell. Will looked up at the moon as Joyce rushed him inside and relished in the moonlight, he'd never been happier to see it after a long day under the sun. They descended some stairs, reaching further underground and into a maze of dingy and narrow passageways. This was all madness, Will didn't recognise anything, not that there was much there to recognise. Without warning Will was filled with a shaking anger.

Will stopped abruptly and tugged his hand free of his Mother's grasp. "What are we doing here, Mother? I'm sure there are others who survived, we have to find them." He told her, giving her a black, fiery look.

"Will, this is bigger than you know." Joyce says, softly and trying to take Will's hand again but he stepped away from her.

"I know exactly how big this is. Our home was attacked, Mother! People we loved are dead. We have no idea where Jonathan is! And you just want us to do nothing?" Will barks back at her, his words bounce against the stone walls. She looks startled, taken aback but still remains quiet.

Then something catches in his throat and Joyce can see tears building up inside of him again. "What can possibly be more important?" Will whimpered, his short lived anger quickly overcome with all his grief for all they had lost.

Cautiously, Joyce approached her son. Will's shoulders hunched in on themselves, tears filled his eyes and started to spill onto the blood dried on his cheeks. He craved his Mother's touch to pull him close like she always did before this whole horrid thing. He broke down into Joyce's shoulder once her arms met around his back.

"Will, you have been so brave for me." Joyce told him, she was hurting and that came apparent from how her voice shook at first but then she took extra care to speak carefully and strongly for her son. "Can you be brave for a little longer? Then I promise it will all make sense." She looked down at her son's face with a sparking adoration

in her eye and carefully rubbed some of the blood off his cheek with her sleeve.

She kept him held tightly close as they walked through the last of the passageways and to end of a long room full of graves and chests. She turned to him in front of an upright rectangular stone structure. Joyce's hand ran through Will's soft locks and she looked into his eyes and savoured every perfect little thing about her boy, from the pretty birthmarks and clear cheeks to his deep kind eyes which always spoke a thousand words. He was the most perfect little boy she could ask for. Will felt at peace at last, the pain in his dead heart finally soothed and some of that safety of home finally regained. Out of the corner of his eye the rectangular structure was opened and before he knew what was happening Joyce had pushed him into it.

The last thing Will saw before the casket slide shut was his Mother's sorrowful gaze then everything went pitch black and he heard a lock click.

"Mother, what is this? MOTHER, PLEASE!" He shouted out to her, repeating her name over and over but his voice just rang back in his own ears, not getting through the thick stone. "Mother, please, I don't understand." He pleaded, feeling the tears coming again but this time he was well and truly alone. He attempted to bash through the stone around him but even his Vampire strength wasn't enough, clearly it was lined with silver. He tried to get to the bottom of the little box, to curl up into a ball but the space was too tight.

In the darkness, completely on his own, time froze.

“Come on, Nance, you’re so slow!” The boy shouted, loving the sharp tap his boots made on the hard stone ground. He turned a corner in a room crowded with things. Huge, rusted burial urns covered in centuries of dust, golden chest after golden chest covered the floor. Mike Wheeler beamed with excitement. This had to be it. This had to be the place the Bloodsuckers had been talking about. He had been beginning to worry his sister was right and they were in the wrong place and he always tried to his hardest to make sure she was never right.

Mike slid open the lid and buried his hands through the nearest urn, finding handfuls of gold and diamonds, he squealed with delight. Even if they didn’t find what the Vampires were looking for they were going to be rich! His Father would surely be impressed. Mike stood, carrying as much gold and tiny green emeralds as possible and turned right into the face of a rotted, sunken face of an undead soldier jumping at him. The boy screamed from the bottom of his lungs and dropped everything he had and pushed at the monster, trying to get those chopping teeth and glowing blue eyes as far from him as possible.

He madly swayed the creature around like they were doing some kind of ballroom dance around the dungeon and screamed over and over from his throat, getting close to screeching. He hated these things. *Hate, hate, hated them.* The undead staggered once then swung forward and fell to the ground, a steel bolt in it’s skull.

Nancy Wheeler howled laughing at her brother. “I told you to stay close.” She told him.

“Shut up!” Mike spat at her.

“You screamed like a little girl.” Nancy teased, smirking. She crouched down and pulled the bolt from the back of the creature's head and reloaded it into her crossbow.

Mike pulled a face at her.

It was Nancy and Mike's first time out on a mission together, Mike's first ever mission and he for one was determined to get it just right. That's if you could call it a mission. On their way home they overheard two Vampires in a clearing discussing something valuable they had to retrieve. After much convincing from Mike they decided to cut through the woods and get there ahead of them and take whatever they were looking for from right underneath their stinking demon noses. Mike was sure whatever it was it would give them some kind of advantage in the war. They were 10 years in, the Wheeler's clan of Vampire hunters, The Hawthorns, versus the Vampires. For about half of that not much progress had been made, most of the creatures of the Night being pushed back into hiding. Retrieving something their enemy desired for whatever reason could be the breakthrough they needed, it could completely change the way of the war around. Mike yearned to be the one to retrieve it, imagining how proud his Father would be when he returned to the castle with the prize. There was a undeniable rift between Mike and achieving his Father's pride. It angered Father that his son never seemed to amount to anything towards the Hawthorns' cause. Mike could just never get the knack of Vampire hunting.

The two set about the room, checking in every urn and chest. They didn't have much of an idea what they were looking for, it could be anything. However Mike had his theories of course. He thought it might be something magical, maybe a sphere with some mystical energy with the power to vanquish the sun or maybe some kind of weapon that had blood draining abilities.

“By the maker, would you look at this!” Mike exclaimed after opening one chest towards the back of the room.

“Have you found it?” Nancy asked, rushing towards her brother who was stood up straight with a shiny golden shield strapped around his forearm. He smirked, tilting it back to look at the old Norse writing carved around the edge, the metal glowed off his face.

Nancy advanced towards her brother. “Put that back now before—” She was interrupted by the cracking of marble all around them. “Behind me now, Mike.” She whispered.

The siblings stood back to back, eyes darting around the room as black slates of marble fell away and four more of the undead creatures swayed out towards the pair, the monsters now gripping jagged ancient swords and swinging them lazily. Nancy swung her crossbow onto her back and drew her sword and stood with her feet apart, ready to attack.

“Okay, pip squeak, fighting stance, grip your axe firmly and swing it just how I showed you and keep that bloody shield up!” She spat at Mike. If he died on her watch she’d never hear the end of it from their Father. It amused her a little to think of hiring a necromancer to bring him back to life again to only kill him herself.

Mike couldn’t help but grin as he drew his silver bladed war axe and held his shield arm out further. He brought it up over his head as the first Creature on his side hurled itself at him. The sword clashed with the metal, making a loud ding and crushing Mike’s arm. The boy winced then made a quick dig at the Creature’s side, hitting the skin

and making it stumble. It didn't produce blood, these things didn't bleed. Mike took the chance whilst it was stumbling to slice at it's shoulder then deliver a hard blow to it's head which cracked the softness of it's skull and sent it to the floor.

Mike stood completely still, lowering both his arms and stared at the corpse in bewilderment. "I did it, Nance." He whispered, in utter shock.

"Mike, watch out!" Nancy yelled.

Mike screamed again and threw his shield arm up knocking back the creature but also simultaneously losing his footing, dropping the axe and grazing the wall beside him, getting caught on a chain and tugging it off the wall down with him to the floor as the creature advanced again. He covered his face, his heart in his mouth and sure this would be where it would all end.

Nancy brought the creature down with one quick uppercut to the face. She stood over her brother laying in dust and rubble right back on his arse. "You'd be dead without me, you st-" She was cut off when the structure Mike had fallen next to started to move.

Mike's eyes widened with curiosity and he shuffled around to get a better look as the mechanism twisted and turned like some sort of complex door unlocking. It opened and out fell a tiny boy.

Crouched right across from him Mike was looking right into his gentle face, he was pasty, looking like he might throw up any moment, his lips were quivered slightly in apprehension and his eyes

were huge and circular and Mike swore they glowed a little, it was almost like he was pleading with him. It sparked something within Mike, an instinct that wanted to hush all the boys worries away, no matter what they were.

Will Byers' blinks excessively. All the light rushing in after all that time in pitch black darkness was a little paralysing. He was taken aback a little to see the floor of the Dungeon and his hands in front of him, he had been sure he'd never see anything again. He looked up and saw a boy opposite him about his age if you counted in human years. He looked past the boy and saw an older girl looking over them cautiously. When he sees the crossbow strapped to her back he wishes that godawful box would pull him back in. Of course Hunters would be the ones to find him. He averted his eyes, feeling panic rise up inside him. *Okay, calm down, Byers* he thought. *You're out of the box, you have room to move, you can get out of this.* There were only two of them and he thinks he has just enough strength to take them both out, maybe even enjoy it a little. Killing a pair of Hunters seemed like the perfect way to start off after getting out of years of imprisonment. The boy would be easiest, he could pounce at him right now and sink his teeth right into his neck, relish in the power of his blood and then make quick work of the older one. The boy was foolish for getting so close. He eyed the pulse in his neck, he could hear his fast beating heart pump all that hot blood through his body, he looked further up into his eyes and tried to imagine what they would look like as life slipped out of them.

Then a shake startled Will's dead heart, he swears it fluttered even though he knows that to be impossible. The boy eyes were the richest dark brown colour Will had ever seen and something about them crept into his anxiety induced mind and soothed it slowly to calmness. Will followed a little collection of freckles down to the sharpest cheekbones which had Will's hands clenching, panicked again but for a whole other reason. He took in the rest of the boys face including the softest candy-like black brown hair encircling his face and soon drifted back to those eyes, feeling security and calmness wash over him again. He knew what was happening. The



bloody Vampire Hunter is hot. And he was attracted to him. He looks down at the ground again to hide his face, silently thanking the gods for the low lighting in this stinking dungeon.

“Are you okay? How long have you been in there?” The boy asked, sweet and tender.

Will stayed quiet. That was a good question. It felt like he stood there for hours, no days, after his Mother locked him in there before he lost all sense of time and now he was here with no idea at all how much time had passed. He could still feel the boys worried gaze and he felt a quick need to answer.

“I...” Will started, his voice extremely croaky after years of inactivity. “I don’t know.”

The boy nods. “That’s okay. You must’ve been in there for a long time, how on Earth did you stay alive?” He asked.

Will gulped and remained quiet. He was quickly releasing there was very little he could tell them, they would soon realise what he was. He wouldn’t be able to keep his appearance hidden for long that’s for sure. He should just kill them now, whilst he had the advantage of surprise, before they had the chance to figure it out and kill him. But there was something holding him back that wasn’t there at first and reaching forward and splitting open the boys neck didn’t seem as easy anymore. He hoped to God he could remember those Alteration spells his Mother had taught him long ago, the ones that could change the colour of his eyes to something more... ordinary. He cursed out his past self for his ignorance that the safety of Selene would last forever and he’d never need the spell.

“You don’t have to tell me, that’s alright.” The boy quickly said, not taking any breaks between words, trying to stop Will from freaking out. “You probably just ate rats, right?” He joked, laughing at himself, his laugh is booming loud but has this intoxicating cheerfulness to it that filled Will’s bones. He hated how cute that was. He smiled, he actually smiled. It was an awkward and shy smile but he smiled. He hated that too.

“I’m Mike” The boy said.

Mike. *Mike, Mike, Mike*, Will repeated the name over and over in his head. Something about it just clicked right inside of him.

“And this is my sister, Nancy.”

Will looked up at her quickly then back down at the ground as she hesitantly waved. If she tries anything he’d definitely drive that crossbrow right through her.

It takes him a moment to realise they were waiting for him to introduce himself. “I’m W-W... Will. I’m Will.” He says, his voice just a frightened whisper.

Mike inched closer to him, slowly. “How did you get locked in there, Will? Maybe I could help you if that’s okay?”

The floor shifted then and Will's spreaded his palms out flat against it, trying to steady his shaking body and make everything stand still. Mike's words made everything flashback at once before his eyes, the murders, Klaus, the fire, his Mother holding something back from him, that very woman forcing him into a box and locking it shut. Everything came at him at once and then he was wheezing for breath.

Mike hurried forward on his knees and sat just beside Will, but not too close to invade his personal space and make him feel crowded. "Breathe, Will. Breathe. You're safe here." He said, his voice gentle and slow, Will latched onto it, it was the only thing that kept him grounded in the present and not going back there. Mike rubbed circles into his back and Will found himself leaning into it slightly, remembering when his Mother used to do that to him long ago.

"My Mother... I don't know why. I don't know." Will trembled, his breathing returning to normal now but still rattling heavily. He hated that he didn't know. He was out in the light with Mike now but he was still very much in there in the dark.

"Your Mother did this?" Mike said, dumbfounded and looking up at his sister and trying to communicate his confusion through a look. He said the first thing that came to mind. "She must've been trying to protect you." He said. "Just protecting you. It was probably really hard to explain. Why else would she do a thing like that?"

Will nodded. He'd never thought about it like that. That made things easier to deal with.

"Is there somewhere we can take you, Will? Who are your parents?" Mike asked. The boy was sincere and genuinely wanted to help the

best he could.

Will straightened up. He couldn't believe this Hunter was offering to help him! He suddenly found his voice again.

"There is, yes." He said, nodding and thinking for a while. The truth was he had about 8% of an idea where his family might be. He thought going back to Selene would be a good start to search for them. And he felt like he needed to see the Village again for some odd reason. "But I'm sorry, Mike. Thank you for releasing me and offering to help but I think I'll keep as much as possible to myself for now. I... I don't know whether I can trust you yet." He added. Although he felt a need to just pour everything out to Mike right now, he could probably make sense of that too, but his instincts and fear of Mike's sister told him not to. Thankfully, several hundred or so lonesome summers ago he had committed the maps of Hawkins and Selene's location within them to memory and he could probably lead them there.

Mike pulled Will to his feet. "Let's get going then!" He smiled, happily and brushed some dust off Will's cloak (he was absolutely covered in thick mountains of the stuff from head to toe!). Gods, Will wished he would stop touching him!

This was a happy miracle if Will was honest. He now had two well armed and trained people willing to protect him and take him exactly where he need to go. He was well on the way to finding the answers he was looking for. Apart from they were both trained to eradicate his entire existence. Oh and he was becoming alarmingly increasingly attracted to one of them. He prayed this would work out because he didn't know what would happen and what he'd do if it didn't.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

thanks for the reads on first chapter!

any feedback is greatly appreciated! :))

### 3. Chapter 3

Nancy Wheeler scowled at her little brother. She didn't understand how he could talk so naturally to the stranger. She supposes she shouldn't really be surprised, Mike did always walk straight into things without thinking about it all that much. He trusted easily and didn't ever consider the dangers people may pose. Nancy often wondered if he had any common sense at all or maybe had a missing brain cell. She could remember too well the days when 7 year old Mike would bring home wild animals such as injured rats, wolves, even a troll once or twice. Their Mother would get so mad. She would order one of their Father's men to take whatever it was out back and shoot it right between the eyes. Mike would lock himself away in his room and cry and whenever his Mother called him for dinner he'd ignore her completely and stay stubborn in his room. Eventually when he was back out of his room he would be even more irritable than ever. This was quite a common occurrence in their house growing up. Mike Wheeler just had a ridiculous habit of stumbling into danger, it was in his dna.

But this was reckless and stupid even by his standards. Here they were in a dungeon that they knew held a hidden secret of the Vampire world and here a pale, agitated stranger falls out of a box, not knowing how many years he had been in there and refusing to share much of why or how he survived in there at all and nothing about that seemed offish to Mike? She watched as he patted down Will's clothes, smiling at him, heartfelt like some dewy eyed school boy. How in the world wasn't he at least a little unnerved? She had to set his head straight.

"Mike, can I talk to you? Alone." She murmured, giving Will a suspicious eye and beckoning Mike over to her.

"I'm just going to talk with my sister for a moment, Will, just wait

here, okay? I'll be right back." Mike whispered to Will.

He'd figured Nancy would pick a problem with helping Will out. With their Mother not around anymore she often filled her shoes of being over paranoid and ordering him about and it was the thing that got on his nerves about her the utter most. He joined her by the door, leaving Will drifting next to the same stone structure he'd fallen out of, looking at the dungeon around him in a far off daze.

"What do you think you're doing?" Nancy glares at him, her tone icy.

Mike frowned. "What do you mean?" He looks back at Will, only feeling a glare of protectiveness spark up inside him. "I just-"

"Do you not remember why we're here? Those Vampires said there was something valuable here." She asked, looking at him and waiting for it to click in that thick head of his.

Mike shrugged uncomfortably, unsure of what she was implying. "He looks like he needs some help." He says, quietly.

"He isn't just some stray cat, Mike." She looked over at Will who had pull his hood up so it half covered his face and was trying his hardest to avoid looking at her. She stepped closer to Mike, still keeping a cautious eye trained on Will and lowered her voice when she next spoke. "There's something wrong about him. I don't like how secretive he is. What if he's what they were looking for? What if he's one of them?" She made an effort to stress the last question.

Mike looked back at Will again. He was shorter than the two of them and slim built, he only looked gentle and fragile and hadn't stopped shaking since he'd stepped out of the box and into the open. Considering this it had never crossed Mike's mind that Will would ever be involved with something as evil as the ways of the Vampires, he was too stunned by him to even consider it.

"Just look at him, Nance. He looks scared of us more than anything. Don't you think if he was going to kill us he would've done it by now?" Mike asks, his voice low and delicate as he watched Will bend down and grab one of the swords still in the grip of one of the undead, it takes a few tugs but he pulls it away free.

Nancy shudders at the sight. "That could all be an act! You know how tricky that sort are. I'm not about to let us walk into a Vampire trap, Mike." She says, her words sharp and extra pointed.

"Look, we'll help him for now. If things get even the slightest out of hand we'll kill him." Mike says in a simple as that sort of way. But an odd side of him regrets the promise immediately.

Nancy huffs. "You mean I'll save you from getting his teeth sunk in your neck!" She snaps.

Mike chuckles at her and walks back to Will.

Will stands stiff and upright and holds the sword tightly by his side, he's unsure of what to do with it. Mike smiles reassuringly as he approaches and once again Will feels an ounce of shaky happiness flood into him and smiles back.



“Are you ready to get going?” Mike asked.

Will forced an awkward laugh then stopped himself abruptly. “Yes, I’ve more than had enough of this place.” He said, quiet and full of shyness.

Nancy leads them from the room whilst making a big show of loading a bolt into her crossbow. Nerves wracked Will as he trained his eyes on her back as they walked through the passageways his Mother had dragged him through all those years ago. He still couldn’t wrap his head around that that had actually happened. His own Mother, a woman who he only knew to treat him with such a caring and gentle hand, someone who had time and time again let him know he always had her complete and utter support, had forced him into a stone prison lined with silver and locked him up tight for years, for two complete strangers, who were their enemies of all things, to find him. All without a glimmer of an explanation. He clung onto Mike’s theory, it was the only thing that seemed like it was going to keep him from falling insane before he got his answers.

Walking beside the two Vampire hunters still throws him off and leaves an uncomfortability in his stomach. He was still incredibly unsure what would happen if the situation went south. He’d like to think in the midst of the danger, of Nancy turning on him and firing a bolt at him or Mike drawing his axe, that his instincts would kick in and he’d be able to fight them off but he couldn’t shake the feeling creeping in at the back of his mind that he just might not.

Will could sense the bustle of the city around him, feel the life but he couldn't actually bring himself to look up. They'd been travelling north for a day and his companions had decided they needed to rest for the night in the city of Summerfall. In theory Will loved this, being around humans which had always fascinated him, seeing tightly knit families walking amongst the markets, tasting all the nose tickling treats and children running free without a care in the world. But in his fantasies he was human and Will wasn't shaken with so much panic. All around him he could hear the fast beating hearts surrounding and feel the heat radiating from the veins filled with fresh, delicious blood. It pulled at the ache for hunger within his stomach. He hadn't had a feeding in god knows how long and it was taking a huge toll on him now. It amplified his senses, bringing out every juicy, beating thing about the people around him and targeting it all right at his starving stomach. Even worse still he was getting extremely weak, he could feel himself slowly falling away. He needed to feed. Right now.

But it wasn't possible. Thinking about it it'd be easy to find something to sink his teeth into. He could slip away whilst Mike and Nancy slept and find some lonesome wanderer which he could corner down an alley and make quick work at his neck, maybe even take a vial or two for the future. Easy enough. But it was the effects that worried Will. He would be given a formidable strength that he could surely tear down anyone in his path with, yes. But on the downside it would leave his Vampirism wide open to Mike, he wouldn't be able to hide it with any Alteration spells in that state and revealing himself wasn't a fear he was willing to consider facing yet.

However he also feared if he went without blood any longer the temptation would become too much and his conscious and free will would eventually slip from his grasp. His animalistic nature would take over and bringing utter carnage. He'd slaughter everyone around him without a second thought. So, he could feed and gain back his strength and piece of mind but reveal himself to Mike and Nancy or he could continue to starve himself until he eventually slipped up and revealed himself to Mike and Nancy. Neither option seemed

particularly appealing to him but he was running out of options. He decided it was best to wait it out.

Nancy leaves the two boys in the market and hands Mike a pouch of gold, making him swear to us it on 'reasonable resources and reasonable resources only' then she left to go book them a room at the inn.

Mike leads Will through the stalls, pointing out the townspeople shouting into the crowds about all the fine garments and fresh food they offered he carried an joyful glint in his eyes as he looked back at Will. The smell clouded Will's nostrils, in the circumstances it was jarring.

Mike picks up two sugary twisted pastries with bright red cherries on top and gives the man a couple of gold coins. He throws one to Will who catches it without batting an eyelid. Will recognises it from the crates Alonzo's men would retrieve from carriages they had ransacked on the road outside Selene. He always took a quick look at the food, maybe even tried (and failed) to taste some, before they were thrown away as they were no use to the Clan. Jonathan had told him pastries like this were usually treats parents bought their children for doing their chores. When Will was younger he had gotten his own thrall as a treat. He was incredibly jealous of normal human boys.

Mike and Will look into each other's eyes and both took a bite. Despite all the sweetness still turning bland in Will's mouth when Mike giggles and grins he does too. The crowds passing by them blur out and he can now only see Mike and that sets a glow in his stomach, ignoring the diriness of knowing he's is so exposed to everyone, he feels like he did in his dreams ever since he was a child.

Mike threw the coin purse up in the air then caught it again with a fine clank. "So! My sister gave me quite a lot of gold, what do you want to buy? Anything! Take your pick." He said, grinning and signaling to the goods all around them with an arm.

Will smiled back sheepishly and opened his mouth but no words would come out. He didn't think he was at all in a position to start asking for stuff and besides Nancy had told them to be responsible with their money and he didn't fancy getting Mike carried away with it and ending up on Nancy's bad side. He was also just a little too shy, during the whole ride from the dungeon to Summerfall no matter how many stories Mike told him or good intentioned questions he asked Will tried to remain as quiet as possible and kept away from wandering too close to the boy.

"Let's see..." Mike says, he grabs the front of Will's robes and peaks under them, the contact startling the smaller boy a little.

"Will! Your only wearing pyjamas!" Mike tuts. "You'll be freezing!"

"You don't have to waste your gold on clothes. Nancy was very specific on using it on buying us supplies for the road... within reason." Will stumbled, quickly.

Mike scoffs and wavers it off. "Finding you some clothes that aren't falling apart at the seams is reasonable, isn't it?" He asked.

To be fair he was right. Wearing the same pyjamas for 10 years had

quite the toll on the fabric and he not only stuck out like a sore thumb but he felt incredibly bare, some new clothes wouldn't be such a bad idea. He nodded.

"Great!" Mike said, he straightened the golden shield on his arm and took Will's hand and lead him through the crowds and away from the market. "There's a general goods store just down here."

They came up to the front of a small one story house with a crooked sign outside the door that read 'Gunther's General Guds'. Yes. Goods was really spelt like that. Inside every inch was jam packed with different tunics and trousers, dress robes, plenty of books, even a few weapons. This was all lit by several weak oil lamps throughout the store. Holding a lamp close to his face behind the counter was a drowsy old elf, who Will thought must be Gunther.

Gunther squinted at them and opened his mouth to talk but only spurted out a cluster of coughs. Mike smiled at him and nodded patient and sorrowful, making Will giggle a little.

"Welcome to Gunther's general guds. How can I help you two young men?" Gunther said after clearing his throat several times.

Mike stepped up to the counter. "Good afternoon, sir. We'd like to acquire some of your finest clothes for my companion here." He tells him.

*Companion*, Will thought. What did that mean to Mike? He wondered. He tried to push that out of his head. He was making a point of not dwelling too much on feelings between him and Mike. This thing

they had, the reason they were together, was just a means of getting from point A to point B. If Mike Wheeler mattered to Will's life at all it would only be for the shortest of time. He might even kill him and his sister as soon as he gets to Selene.

"It doesn't have to be too expensive. The basics will do." Will butted in.

But Gunther was already piling up an array of different fancy fabrics, satin, fur, silk, leather. He hands Mike the pile and escorts them into a small room in the back lit by a small overhead light. Gunther left them alone to try on the clothes.

Mike stood in front of Will shifting through the bundles Gunther gave him, only a step or two away from him, just on the edge of awkwardly close. Will watches him closely, taking his chance to get a good look whilst those dark brown, almost black eyes, looked down at the fabrics as he ran his long fingers over them, glinting with a sprinkle of childlike excitement and biting his lip. Will thought about how it would be to have teeth bite him for once.

Mike chose something and looked up and caught Will staring. He smiled, confused. "What?" He asked, an awkward laugh showing through his words.

A hot blush floods his cheeks causing him to shudder under Mike's gaze and pull his hood further down over his face, continuing to use it as a barrier of sorts between him and Mike, to shield his Vampirism and to hide his embarrassment at the strange way Mike was making him feel.

“How’s about this?” Mike asked, holding up a green tunic made of linen and encrusted with silver patterns on the edge along with a brown leather over vest.

Will nods. Green was always one of Will’s favourite colours. It was so earthy and so highly associated with good things it just made him feel good to wear it.

Mike pointed to Will’s cloak. “Could you take that off?” He asks.

Will twitches. He hadn’t had a chance to try out the Alteration spell yet. He’d thought it over ruthlessly during their day of travel and he thinks he can remember the incantation but the possibility of getting it wrong sets him right on the edge. His whole body freezes up and his claws extend from his fingertips below the cloak where Mike can’t see. This could be where it all goes wrong. He tries the hardest to clear his mind but the terrified buzz warning him is too loud and won’t dim. He looks into Mike’s eyes as he speaks the incantation in his mind and hopes, prays it works. And he feels nothing. Was he meant to feel something? Would his magic even work after not being used in so long? He unclasps the cloak and takes his hood down, slowly.

All at once Mike’s eyes, his lips, maybe even his soul, his very being smiled at Will’s wide, woodish hazel eyes. He slackened, as though his whole body went numb and he practically melted. Mike felt Will’s eyes reach right into him, it was like they tickled his insides with a feather. Will only blushed back and in apprehension chewed on the inners of his cheek.

“Your eyes...” Mike started, wrinkled in shock. “Why do you always hide your face?” He asked, unable to grasp why anyone would be

ashamed of such a beautifully compelling face.

Will looked down, despite his spell working he was too nervous to look at Mike, he didn't like being bare to him. "I guess I don't want people to stare." He replied, hushed and almost inaudible.

That was true. He didn't want people to stare. But people didn't like the way Will usually looked, without spells, because of a different reason than what Mike was thinking. People were scared of Will's face because it was pulled from their deepest nightmares, he sent a chill of evil and outright fear right down their necks.

Mike's smile dropped and he pouted his lips in confusion, thinking Will didn't think he was pretty enough. The idea of Will thinking that pained him, that just won't do, he thought.

"Will," Mike said, experimentally, testing the name in his mouth as though it was his first time saying it. He thought carefully of what to say. "I can't think of a reason anyone would stare at you apart from in awe at how breathtakingly beautiful you are."

Will sheepishly smiles at him for a long moment. Mike thinks *he's pretty*. That interested him and instantly shifted his mood to happy, so so happy. And smug. Why was he smug? He'd known Mike for a day and that didn't call for his thoughts on Will to matter to him. And as mentioned before Mike wasn't important in Will's life, he wouldn't be sticking around. However over the course of that day Mike had treated him with the uttermost kindness that he didn't need to give to a complete stranger like they were, he'd made sense of the bad stuff that Will had been mulling over for years now and he looked at him in a way that Will couldn't remember ever been looked at before. Will realised that he did care about Mike's opinion and



Mike calling him pretty was one of the best things he'd heard for as long as he could remember.

Will takes off his cloak and Mike takes it from him and hands him the clothes. They share a couple seconds of awkward looking at each other, Mike still loved up and smiling. Will raises the clothes and signals he needed privacy. Mike snapped out of his trance and in a daze left the room chuckling sheepishly and waited outside the door.

Will took off his pyjamas and boots and looked down at his naked body. His whole body was a ghostly, marble white and his limbs were thin yet short, like the shortest branches that were at the very top of the tree. It brought a sick feeling into his stomach and encased his throat with a heavy weight. He drifted long finger tips over his chest, lingering on his nipples for a while and across his ribcage. Nothing but cold. He touched his cheeks and was still met with the same bitterness. He could never achieve the heat and warmth that Mike's body would feel like against his and couldn't return it to him. If Mike was to touch him he'd be met with a biting shiver that he would edge away from. It prickled Will's nerves.

Tired of being on display, even to himself, he pulled on the clothes Mike had picked out for him. From being held in the tight grasp of Mike the fabrics had taken some of his warmth which now Will shared when it clung to his body, he sighed in bliss.

When he opened the door Mike was leaned against the wall just outside, waiting, but he straightened up once he heard the door creak open. His mouth hung open staring at Will, completely aghast. The cloth hugged Will's torso snugly, in just the right way and accentuation the soft fullness of his cheeks.

“How does it feel?” Mike asked.

Will nodded. “Good.” He mumbled, testing out the fitting around his arm. It was a little long, sleeve just touched his palms but it still looked nice.

Mike nodded back, a brief moment of affirmation passed between them via the look and Mike walked over to Gunther to pay.

A shelf of books nearby caught Will’s eye and he drifted over to them. They were tattered brown moleskin things with bronze runes embossed on the front. He recognised the runes as representing schools of magic. Magic, beside moving past the Village to freedom, was one of his biggest fantasies in his long uninteresting life. The possibilities seemed endless and beautiful to him, most importantly he felt like expanding his skills would increase his value and make him more interesting, even if it was just a little bit more.

“Interested in sorcery, Will?” Mike ask, right in Will’s ear over his shoulder, making him jump.

“My Mother used to study it.” Will told him casually, magic was just another thing with his parents.

He stopped in his tracks and suddenly a huge sadness filled his eyes. “Sorry. She studies magic. I’m trying not to think of her in the past tense.” He says, his voice getting a little shaky. He was struggling to not think the worse of the situation, making up his mind that he

wouldn't get back to Selene to find there was nothing there anymore.

Mike looked at him, with the same gentle and caring gaze once again and thought something over.

"I watched your sword swing out in the woods when we ran into those wolves, you aren't too good." Mike said matter of factly, despite not having any superior knowledge on swordsmanship at all. He just didn't wanna seem like he was coddling the kid too much. "It'd make sense if we got you some spell tomes instead. If your Mother has a knack for the craft you might measure up to having one too. And you might feel closer to her. Like she's here with us."

Will thought about that. As much as he was mad at his Mother at the moment he missed her dearly and the idea of her being gone forever terrified him. As well as answers driving him forward, his *need* to see his Mother again, to know she was okay also drove. Having something to remind him of that goal and feel connected to it would help push him even more.

"And it'd be a useful way to spend our money." Mike added, smirking and winking at him.

That makes Will shudder. He nods and picks up two books. Restoration, the school of healing and Destruction, the school of elemental magic and power. Mike pays Gunther and they leave the store together and head towards the inn.

Will clutches the books closely to himself and as he walks he takes in the grand nordic carvings on the houses around him and all the

families going about their happy days and for once he feels like he blends in. He's out in the open in a mortal Village, the very place he was always warned away from, with no cloak hiding himself and he doesn't fear looking people in the eye. He's able to just walk with Mike, making quick shy side glances at him when he thinks he isn't looking like some loved up merry man. He feels completely safe and at ease for once in his goddamn life. His dead heart knows it's all because of Mike.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

hey, so first off thanks for loads of lovely comments!  
they give me life lmao

secondly, sorry this is so late. ive been ultra busy and havent had the chance to write in times for mondays.  
so heres a nice chapter that i cut short in the middle of the week with less angst than planned and more soft!

hope you enjoy! feedback to so great!

## 4. Chapter 4

### Notes for the Chapter:

sorry this took so long but it took me forever cause like the first half of this chapter was one of those parts that's necessary but i hated writing. really looking forward to the next few chapters though! enjoy!!

From the Attic room in the Honeyberry inn Will could see the main room below and the circular fire pit in the centre which makes the swaying shadows of the drunken patrons flicker upwards upon the wooden panels of the walls, they come out creepy and distorted. He feels it taunt him so he looks away and focus on repeating the words of the same line of the spellbook in his lap.

None of the words on the page seemed to fit together, getting jumbled somewhere between his eyes and his brain. He couldn't understand why it all seemed such nonsense ight now when whenever he had read the very same books whilst sat in his Mother's lap magic felt like second nature, he'd think if he leapt up and merely whispered the words the spells power would flow from him without a moment's wait. But now without her here by his side he felt hopeless. He tried to picture her stood in the light of the Village halls study conjuring flurries of ices and flashing lightning clouds and hoped it would give him just an ounce of solace. It did not.

A sharp clank startles Will out of his trance when Mike puts a tankard down on the circular wooden table in front of him, it tightens up his shoulders and he looks up at Mike with wide open, fear shaken eyes.

Mike looks worried. "What? Did I startle you?" He asked.

Will forces an embarrassed laugh. "Uh, no... I was, um, reading." He murmured.

Mike smirked at him and edged one of the tankards full of mead towards him and sat in the chair opposite him. "How is it? Are you

getting a hang of it?" He asked.

"It's hard. But I think I'll get there."

Mike watched him closely and mulled something over in his head for a moment before talking. "Did your Mother teach you anything whilst she was studying magic?"

Will looked at him and tried to figure out the curiosity in his eyes. "No. She taught me a few protection and healing spells" and the Alteration spells he could use to hide from people like Mike. "but that's it. She never wanted me to try out fire, frost or any other offence spells because they can go terribly wrong and she didn't want to take the risk." Will explained.

Mike nodded. "Ah, I see. Well at least she didn't want you to get hurt." He said.

"I wasn't powerful enough is more like it." Will mumbled.

"Don't say that. Your doing it now right?" Mike encouraged, he rubs Will's leg under the table with his own at an effort of comfort.

But Will wasn't able to do it. No matter how hard he tried. He was useless without his family.

"Why don't you say the words to out loud right now to me?" Mike suggests.

Will shrugs. "I don't know, Mike..." He didn't want to humiliate himself in front of Mike. He couldn't imagine how embarrassed he'd feel.

"Come on, Will. I think you can do it. I believe you can." Mike said, a skip in his words and his ridiculously warm eyes smiling at him.

The two boys smile at each other, Mike stupidly wide and happy and Will small and cheeks glowing red.

Will shrugs again, giving in. Mike's smile was too much for him, it could probably get him to do anything. "Okay, I'll try." He surrenders.

He puts the book down laid open on the table in front of him and presents his hand across it to Mike.

“So how are you supposed to lay out your hand?” Mike asks, he takes his hand and instantly shivers. “Jesus, you’re freezing!” He exclaims.

But Mike doesn’t let go of his hand, he edges the candle closer to Will.

Will smiles thankfully and clears his throat and looks at the book, visibly flustered. “In a curved formation as though holding a ball.” He read.

Mike cups Will’s fingers. “Like that?” He asks.

Will nods, nerves wracking him.

“Should I take my hand away?” Mike asked.

“No. I think it’s helping.” He murmurs back. He felt something open to him that wasn’t there before.

Mike watches the other boy. “Whenever you’re ready.” He whispers carefully.

“Aisthantheíte ilektriká.” Will hisses, training his eyes on his palm and the buzz he had felt spreading through him ever since Mike had taken his hand in his.

Both boys wait expectantly impatient and nervous.

With a crisp crack a blue energy sparks from Will’s fingertips making the duo jump.

Mike starts to clap enthusiastically. “Well done, Will. You did it! You did it.” He cheers.

Will grins from ear to ear, filled to the brim with glee. “I couldn’t have done it without you.” He stumbles out his words.

Mike frowns then and shakes his head. “You have to give yourself credit. You did this. Will, you’re remarkable.” He told him

confidently, still nodding and patting his knee.

Will can see the flicker of the candle light mingle with Mike's freckles, warming them up even more. He never allowed himself the habit of being proud of himself. But seeing Mike, here, absolutely and without a question gushing of pride of him he was completely blissed out. Remarkable, Will thought.

Mike sits back in his chair long and takes a long gulp from his tankard, his now misty eyes looking away from Will and into the candles flame.

Will watches him closely, curious and trying to dissect the suddenly vacant expression on Mike's face.

"Are your Mother and Father proud of you, Will?" He asks after a few moments.

The directness of the question throws Will off for a second.

"I think so." He answers, slowly and sounding not so sure.

Silence passed between them as both boys mulled something over.

"My Father not so much. He wants me to be something more than I can be." Will adds, holding himself back from going into detail about the Court.

Mike nods, listening to Will's words and showing understanding. "I get that." Mike says. "When I was a kid it was like my Father didn't give a gods damn before..." Mike struggles to find the words and taps his knee incessantly. He looks up at the ceiling and the candlelight catches in the beginnings of tears starting to well in the corner of his eyes.

Will reaches forward on instinct and puts his hand on Mike's thigh. "Hey, hey. It's okay." He soothes.

Mike grasps his hands together then exhales long and sharp.

"Have you ever looked fear in the face?" He said after a moment of composing himself. "Looked into the red evil eye of a demon?"



To the touch, Will was always cold but now he felt cold. He shrugged.

“My Father did” Mike continued. “and he’s never come out of it. When I was 6 years old Vampires” He says the word with such venomous hatred that it makes Will almost shiver. “murdered his wife in cold blood. My- My Mother.”

Will feels himself be surrounded with a startling guilt.

“That changed something in my Father. He only saw one purpose for our family after that, to eradicate that filth from the earth!” Mike shouts, a sudden anger rising up from someone deep within him.

Will actually does shiver now.

Mike takes a long, shaky, tempered breath. “But don’t think it was out of love, dear Will. No, this isn’t a tragical tale of heartbreak and romance. My Father is driven by his own stinking pride, it doesn’t make any difference to him that he lost a wife or his own children lost their Mother. He was just happy with having a reason to push us forward to ‘fight the good fight’. He was happy that his Vampire Hunters clan, the Hawthorns, got to rise from the ashes of our lives. Everything that made me happy.” Mike says, his tone doused in bitterness and this hot boiling rage which then hits a too high point and renders him silent, downtrodden.

He smiles at Will but Will can see the tears in his puffy eyes and see the force behind it. He notices Will’s nervous demeanour.

“I’m sorry, Will. All this horrid talk must be frightening you to death. I’ve drank too much that’s all.” Mike whispers, making a pathetic attempt at hiding his face.

Will wanted more than anything for Mike to stop there, he did. It pained him immensely to hear Mike talk this way and to be so hurt doing so. Will’s kind had ruined Mike’s life. Will thought he’d do anything to repay Mike in some way.

Will pulls his hands away from his face and hushes him. “It’s okay. It’s okay. It doesn’t do well to keep things bottled up now, does it?

It's always better to get them out there. I, for one, am honoured you've chosen to talk to me." He smiles and nods reassuringly.

Mike smiles back, real this time. "It's just all I can think about all the time is..." Will gently rubs his thumb against the back of Mike's hand as he chokes up once again. "seeking vengeance on those bastards, those devils, for all the hurt they've put into the world. How could creatures be so evil, Will?"

Will then pulls Mike into a tight hug and lets him cry into his shoulder. "I don't know, Mike. It's... horrible." He tells him as he rubs soft circles into his back, stirring every teardrop out of him.

Will knew his entire existence was a monstrosity.

"Thank you." Mike sobs into Will's shoulder.

"You're very welcome."

Mike pulls back and his glistening eyes glow as he looks at Will's beautiful face. Then he sloppily connects their lips together.

Will gasps, he'd never felt such warmth against his lips, had never being able to savour the feeling of something pushed against them like that. For a moment deep inside himself he swears he feels alive, like he finally has a nice, ordinary, beautiful soul.

Mike parts their lips abruptly and leaves Will itching for more.

"I'm sorry!" Mike says in a quick slurred way. "I don't know what came over me. I've drank far too much. I'm so sorry."

Will puts a finger to his lips and a hand on his cheek. "Mike, it's alright. It felt nice." He tells, smiling the widest he had in their whole time together.

"It did?" Mike chuckled.

Will nodded and laughed at all the joy he felt. "It did."

Mike covers Will's hand with his own and inches closer for another kiss. But then screams fill the tavern.

They peer over the banister into the tavern below and see a Farmer, his wife and their daughter come wailing towards Nancy at the bar.

“Hawthorns! Hawthorns! Come quick, they took my son!” The Farmer grovels at Nancy’s feet as the wife sobs uncontrollably.

Nancy looks down at them pitifully and tries to calm them down.

Mike and Will run downstairs together. Mike strides straight for Nancy, walking tall and trying to look intimidating. In different circumstances Will may have laughed at him. But now he beelines for the child who had been left lingering by the door in her parents haste.

“Hello, little miss. I’m Will. What’s your name?” He says casually, he kneels down onto his knees to look her in the eyes. He’d seen the same frightened, shock-shaken look before in the eyes of the children of Selene.

“L-Linnette.” She responds timidly.

Will soothes her arm in a protective manner. “Wow! Linnette? Ain’t that a pretty name?”

Linnette just stares up at Will in amazement and nods.

Will guides Linnette away from her parents and towards the stairs at the back and sits her on them. He grabs a thick woolen blanket from a nearby couch and wraps it around her.

“I assure you, Linnette, my friends are very good at their jobs and they will get your brother back and I’ll shake you on that.” Will says, gleefully presenting his hand which Linnette takes after a moment’s consideration.

Will makes a show of shaking her hand tightly and gets a giggle out of her. As Mike and Nancy deal with her parents he idly chats with her about her life on the farm, making sure to narrowly avoid bringing up her brother. He promises her that she won’t have to sleep at the farm tonight and that he will give her his bed at the Inn. Will feels great, like he was back in his old life again looking after a child.

Nancy and Mike come over shortly.

“Will, can we talk?” Nancy asks curtly.

Will promises Linnette he’ll be right back and joins them by the fire pit.

“We’ve been employed to take down a Vampire clan hiding out in a cave just off the main road out of town.” Nancy tells him, studying his reaction carefully. “I haven’t made any attempts to hide the fact I don’t trust you and I won’t start now. This will be your test. If you join us and aid in killing them we will escort you home safely, if you betray us, refuse or engage in any manner of foul play we shall kill you.”

Mike smiles sorrowfully at him.

Will nodded. He’d have to go along with them, he had no other choice. However after tonight, after that kiss, if there was another choice he wasn’t sure if he’d take it.

\*

When Will opens his eyes the bright lights of the chandelier overhead send a glare across the room and fuzz up his vision before a small shabby room he doesn’t recognise comes into view. Where is he? All he can remember is the dingy lit cave and the blood, so much blood. He sits up in bed and immediately winches at all the pain in his lower body.

Then he remembers. The older Vampire. The heavy blows. The way his body was twisted and turned and bones snapped. He had to figure out where he was and scout the area, figure out what the situation is now.

He rubs the sleep out of his eyes then notices the pale pale whiteness of his arms. He looks in the reflection of the metal bowl on his bedside and jumps back and punches it away at the sight, it clunks to the floor. His face is marble white, almost translucent and sickly, his eyes are a murky yellow. His Alteration spell had worn off! This was bad, this was very bad. *Where’s Mike?*

The door slams open and several of the grey armoured men from Selene barrel in and target their crossbows at him. Will is too weak to even think about moving to defend himself.

A man far older than the Hunters steps forward towards his bed. He carries himself with an annoying importance although that's defeated by the dopey expression on his face.

“Did you think you could fool us, Vampire?” He sneers. He frowns foully at Will. “You’ve got yourself trapped in the middle of the great fabled Hawthorn Castle and we’re going to make you wish that Hades would drag you right back to the hell you came out of.”

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Ps I'm an idiot and in chapter 2 I think?? I mentioned Mike's mom still being alive but yeah that didnt work with the storyline im going with so I went back and changed that if you saw that pretend it never happened and take the angst and gays as an apology

## 5. Chapter 5

Will's body heaves forward under the blow and then is savagely pulled back by chains, snapping his wrists upwards. He grunts in pain.

The man stood in front of him, his torturer, leers down at him and crouches at his feet. From where Will's head hunches forward, torn and tired, he can see his own black blood smeared over the man's boot.

"My name is Billy Hargrove" He said in a horrid, evil way. "And we're going to get quite familiar with each other."

It had been a long, long, long day for Will. He hadn't been able to get any sleep, the silver shackles entrapping his wrists burning into the skin and the jagged stones of the cave floor digging into his knees taking over all the feeling in his body. Up until now Will had had a goal, an endgame he was walking towards but now it was miles away, unseeable, and he was stuck at the bottom of the water reaching for air.

Billy grabs Will by the hair at the back of his head and pulls him back by the roots. Will is forced to look into his eyes which are a terrifying blue, it's like looking right into a life-threatening snowstorm and each snowflake was a single frosted dagger digging itself into him.

Billy smirks in a devilish way. "Let's start with what did you want with the chief's boy?" He asks.

Will remains silent and glares back at him. He hadn't seen Mike since the rescue mission to the caves before he went unconscious. He didn't know how he could ever face him again, how can you ever face someone who you've been lying to all along? Someone who you'd allowed to fall in love with a trickster?

"No answer?" Billy chuckles. "Good. That makes this more fun." He says, flicking out a silver dagger. He drags the point of the blade across Will's neck and upwards to under his chin.

Will winces and crunches his eyes shut. He feels the blood start to trickle down his skin.

"Where were you taking him?" Billy yells.

Will stays stubbornly silent.

Billy then takes one of Will's fingers and stretches it out, making it crack. He places the knife at his knuckle.

"Next time you refuse to answer I take off a finger." He says, which it's clear to see he wants to do. "Where were you taking him?" He asked, he digs the knife in a little as he talks to prove his point.

"Selene." Will says through gritted teeth. He instantly hates himself for giving in.

Billy removes the knife and sits back on his knees on the floor in front of Will. He laughs to himself. "I remember that village. That was a fun time." He looks into Will's eyes, daring him with a wicked grin.

Hate sparks inside of Will.

"So what did you plan to do with him?" He asked.

Will remains silent because frankly he never planned to do anything with Mike as much as he had considered it.

"We're back to the silence?" Billy snarks. "Good." He lands a hard blow across Will's face making the boy whimper.

"I've seen plenty of Vampires put up a good fight over my years but your village was pathetic."

He lands another blow, cracking something in Will's jaw and spilling his own bitter blood into his mouth.

"I reckon we did your kind a favour by getting rid of them. Surely the vermin were an embarrassment even by your kinds standards."

He lands another blow square on his mouth and Will slunks forward.



“But the screams, they were beautiful.”

Pure loathing for Billy reached into Will's heart then. With all the strength he can muster he hurls his head back and spits his own blood into Billy's face.

“I will cut your head off and drain all your blood I swear to the gods!” Will snarls at his torturer, feeling the monster inside of him run through his veins. For once in his life he craved to feed on a human.

Billy looks shocked for a minute then snootily wipes Will's blood off his face. He gets up and walks back to his chest by the door in a dazed way. A chuckle rises up from his throat in a maniac way.

“Is that a promise?” He asks, unclasping a lock in his chest and lifting an object covered in velvet out of it.

“Yes.” Will wheezes back.

“You are a treat, rat.” Billy says, he unwraps an elegant silver cross as he approaches the trapped boy.

Will starts to shake straight away at the sight, putting all he's got left in pushing his legs into the stone floor to get any distance between himself and Billy. But he isn't successful.

Billy grabs him by the wrist and rips his sleeve down to the bare skin. He watches Will as though he was a spectacle as he presses the cross right over his pulse, it bubbles and melts into his skin. Will's blood-curdling screams fill the cave.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

hey! I know its been a while and I'm really sorry. and this is ultra short but it's october 1st as i write this so i was like hey, lets get summat out for my one horror fic for the start of spooky season!

hope you enjoy a little torture here lmao! kudos and feedback in the comments is so so appreciated, more than you know! thanks for reading! :))

## 6. Chapter 6

Mike Wheeler hadn't been able to get a minute of sleep all night. He couldn't stop playing the day in the cave over and over in his head. Killing the first few vampires was easy, they killed them whilst they slept, Will had even taken care of some himself. It was all going perfectly well until they arrived in the cavern that the vampires had turned into a makeshift dungeon and had found the mangled remains of the boy they were looking for. The sight of another innocent life lost to those demons brought tears of anger and frustration to the eyes of the trio, including Will. They gathered together what was left of the boy and prayed for him. From the corners of the cavern, a dozen of the devils then appeared and pounced on them whilst they were defenceless. Mike had watched Will go down in the fight that had followed, he now realised that kind of stab to the chest would've killed any normal human being.

Mike sits back in his desk chair and rests his hands behind his head. He looks away from the piles of books in front of him that he had gathered on vampire folklore, vampire hunting, myths of the gods, he'd grabbed onto any book that he thought might tell him some answers and make all that had happened make more sense. But he was getting tired of reading, so he looked around the rest of the library at the shelves of fairytales and adventure books. And other guides and handbooks on how to kill vampires stored in rough stone bookcases stacked high above him, the way they're arranged around him he feels boxed in.

*Will is a vampire, Will is a vampire, Will is a vampire,* He kept repeating to himself, hoping it'd drill into his head. He didn't think it could be possible. Will was so kind and gentle, he never meant any harm to anyone. He was the one who had comforted Mike when he had cried and had listened to the horror stories of his life, he had shown such care towards that little girl who he didn't know and had sworn to fight against his own kind for her. Will was the opposite of the monsters he'd heard stories of since he was a kid.

He leaned forward reread the line in the book before him that he'd been reading over and over for hours now. *No matter how easily they trick you into believing otherwise, the vampires intentions are always pure evil.* Mike couldn't imagine Will being evil at all. And there was no trickery that he could see.

Mike stands and shoves his chair under the desk. He drags himself away from the books and out of the library and clambers down the spiral staircase from the tower. He grips onto the cold stone wall for support as thick tiredness hits him all at once.

He soon arrives onto the balcony above the main hall of the castle and peers over the edge to see his father, Ted, and his number one general, Billy, gathered around their small rustic table. The room is shrouded in shadow but he can still make out the angered looks on their faces in the fading candlelight. The hall is weirdly empty aside from them.

"The runt won't talk, sir." Billy says, his disgusted tone bouncing off the walls of the castle up to Mike. "I can go kill him now for you, sir. My blade is always thirsty for demon blood."

"Calm yourself, Hargrove." Ted replies, bored and bothered by his general. "It may be of use to us yet."

Mike shoulders tense and he backs away from the bannister. He was trying not to think of what the Hunters would do to Will. His screams filling the halls and the grisly stench of burnt vampire skin haunted him enough.

Mike backs up towards the heavy wooden oak doors behind him and pushes them open just enough for him to squeeze in. The room inside is filled with misty black smoke which immediately filled his nostrils with the foulest ashy smell and has him gagging. Around the boiling hot pit of a blacksmiths forge sit his two best friends, Dustin and Lucas, reading big leather bound adventure novels by the light of the fire still dressed in their mucky black aprons.

Mike pulls up a stool and joins them, earning chuckles from them both.

“Hey, Vampire Bait!” Lucas greets, smiling widely.

The two burst into laughter at their sullen friend. This whole situation just made a fool of Mike and the two of them couldn’t find it more funny.

“Shut up.” Mike grunts, shooting them both a black look.

He’d known the two of them since he was a baby and they were by far his favourite people in this castle. Their parents had always said the three of them were matches made by the gods themselves and were destined to be powerful brothers in battle one day. Which hadn’t turned out how they thought because Dustin was in love with smithing and his dream to make the best vampire killing weapons in the land, Lucas had more of an interest in the politics of the world and Mike, well, Mike was useless.

“Can’t sleep?” Dustin asks.

Mike nods his head and scratches his chin. He leans forward on an elbow and stares into the embers of the pit.

“Do you think there’s a such thing as a good vampire?” He asks.

Dustin snorts up in laughter again then went back to his book, not wanting to bother with his friends silly antics. Lucas however had never looked so serious.

“You’re not thinking he could be good are you?” He asked.

Mike shrugs nervously. “It’d be foolish to eliminate the possibility.” He answers him.

Lucas shakes his head and tuts at his friend. “Don’t be foolish, Mike. Vampires are devious, evil things. I bet he couldn’t wait to sink his teeth into you.” Lucas tells him, matter of factly.

Mike shakes his head. “You don’t know him like I do.” He sighs.

No one was listening to Mike’s side of things. He’d told his parents over and over of how good Will was and how sympathetic he was for Mike and his family’s past over their days together but it fell on ignorant ears whose minds were unwilling to be changed. Even Nancy, who had been there all along wouldn’t listen to him or vouch

for Will.

“You didn’t see how scared he was, I’d never seen anyone so lost. You didn’t see how selfless he was helping people, helping *me*! I don’t believe he could ever be evil.” Mike says, not stopping for a moment to breathe.

Lucas grips Mike’s shoulder tightly and turns the boy to face him.

“Listen to me, Mike. He. Tricked. You. You weren’t supposed to see it, that’s what he wanted. That monster will burn in hell by tomorrow morning.” He tells him.

Mike nods his head. Lucas was right. Will could’ve been deceiving him all along, he was always so secretive, he wouldn’t even tell him where they were going. Mike felt so stupid for not realising the truth sooner and being lead into his trap so easily. He felt the shame he brought on his family.

There’s three quick knocks on the oak door and Dustin groans as he sets his book down and stands up to go answer. There’s three booming bangs on the door.

“Yes, I’m coming! ” Dustin shouts. “By the gods, who is knocking at this hour. OH, Chief Wheeler, sir! Pleasure to see you this evening sir! What can I do for you, sir?”

Mike’s heart skips a few beats. He looks behind him past where

Dustin stands tensely holding the door open to his Father, fixing his son with a striking dark look, Billy standing next to him wearing a grin.

“Michael, you have dishonoured your family’s name bringing that thing here.” He says, his voice sharp and bitter. “At dawn you shall execute him yourself, in hope you will regain some of the honour you’ve lost us all these years.”

Mike turns numb, fear spiking up his spine. It feels as though something closes in on his heart, stabbing and squeezing it, burying it deep within himself. He had no chances of sleeping now.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

hope you enjoyed that! its a little short than my chapters usually are for this fic but hey, i hate writing as mike wheeler and its my second post today so im proud.

lmao kudos and feedback are greatly appreciated!

ps. i wanna take a second to say thanks for all the lovely comments on this lately it really makes me so happy to hear people like this fic!



## 7. Chapter 7

Drums resonant off the stone walls, the only sound in the otherwise quiet hall fills Mike's ears making them ache. All the torches in the room had been extinguished, seeping all the light out aside from the glowing embers of the firepit before him and a dim chandelier that looms far above. His father's most esteemed hunters are sat in front of him arranged in two groups of rows with an aisle running between them, above them on the balconies his fellow newby hunters, the people he grew up with, crowd together and watch, along with their children and wives. It's quite unsettling how they're all gathered around like this was a good bit of sport and a boy's life wasn't about to be taken.

To the side of the hall a door groans open and immediately the drums cease, replaced by a ghostly silence. The silence is soon interrupted by the tapping of large boots hitting the concrete floor followed by the scrapping of someone being dragged behind them. Billy appears at the end of the aisle, wearing his shiniest battle armour, with a sword strapped to his waist, he hasn't bothered to do anything with his disgustingly greasy hair. Mike can see Will being dragged behind him.

Mike turns his back on him and faces his Father sat in his tall wooden chair with his sisters by his side. His father is devoid of empathy as he looks at his son, he regards him with a sense of seriousness and disapproval. Nancy, however, does not look at him, she looks past him with her eyes trained on Billy and Will, like she couldn't wait for the show to start. Her eyes linger behind him, on what Mike assumes must be Will then she looks right at Mike, not blinking. Hollie, his baby sister who was just barely six now, looks away in dreamy sort of state to one corner of the room.

Billy comes to a stop behind him. His father nods to him and then

turns to address his audience. Mike doesn't listen to him, he didn't care for his father's dramatic ramblings right now. He tightens his grip on the wooden handle of his crossbow, trying to stop the metal weapon from shaking in his hands he pulls it closer to his body as he turns back around.

Will has been forced to his knees in front of him. The boy's skin is paler than ever, accentuated by the black circles around his eyes which still glow gold and covered with the glisten of worn tears. Every inch of Will is slashed and torn, fresh blood is still running black down his neck. His hands are tied together by rope in his lap, the rope's purpose is to humiliate him as if he was at his proper strength Will would've been able to break those bindings with incredible ease. As he looks into Will's tired, saddened eyes a single tear spills over and trickles down his cheek.

Mike's lips tremble. He can't back down now, he'd been sure he was going to do this, make his Father proud and finally be of use to his family. All of a sudden there's silence again, his father has stopped talking and all eyes are on him, waiting for the deed to be finally done. Mike takes a crossbow bolt out of his pouch and shaking he attempts to insert it into it's holster but he slips and misses it entirely. He looks around the halls and tries to compose himself, completely avoiding Will's gaze. He gives it another go and gets it in on the first try then pulls back the bowstring. He brings the loaded weapon upwards and looks down the target right at Will.

Will stares back up at him, he opens his mouth as if to plead his executor but all that comes out is a rattly breath. It all caught up to him how he got to this, on his knees in front of the boy he loves with no hope or power left, about to be killed by who he just craved to hold at this moment. His long life would now be cut short, his quest for truth lost and replaced by Mike's heart been hurt and tricked. He thought death might actually give him peace now.

Mike twirls around to face his father and fires off the bolt right in the middle of his forehead. Ted Wheeler falls back with a snap, his eyes stilled in wide shock, blood flows down his face.

There's an immediate up cry around them, swords are drawn out of sheaths. Mike turns to his right and fires another bolt at an oncoming man, having reloaded lightening quick.

Billy rises above Will, his neck muscles are pulled taut and his veins bulge, he brings his sword over his head to bring down the killing blow himself.

Will brings up his hands to stop him and catches the blades between his fingertips and despite the burn, he twists his wrists up and cuts the ropes binding him.

Billy freezes in bewilderment.

Will jumps to his feet and tugs the sword from his torturers grasp and kicks him back a few steps. With a spin, Will slashes the sword deeply across Billy's throat, leaps forward and sinks his teeth into the cut. The blood is sour but does it's job and reinforced his bones with a new found might. He grins into his meal. Billy's body falls to the ground dried out and unmoving.

Two men run towards him from behind, crossbows at the ready to ambush him. But he senses them coming and snaps toward them with a flurry of bats and lifted them in the air by their necks and hit them

both together like giant grey cymbals. He throws them to the side nonchalantly.

Mike has a few fallen hunters around him. He's done well but he's clearly growing tired and worrisome which becomes more apparent as hordes of Hunters gather around them.

"Go! I'll take care of this." Will hisses at him.

Mike takes a brief moment of consideration. Will was weakened to the point of death mere moments ago, he needed to stick by his side. But then Will blasts back several Hunters with a cloud of crackling lightning and cracks another's neck with a simple flick of his wrist. Mike smiles, he can clearly handle himself.

Mike charges towards the stairs and jumps up them two at a time. He turns at the top of the staircase onto the balcony and is met by a swinging sword which he blocks with his crossbow.

Nancy slams his back against a wall and pulls the crossbow from his grip and throws it against the opposite wall, shattering it.

"Evil has possessed you!" She spits in his face. "Think of what you did, Mike. Is that demon worth dying for?"

Mike looks at her pleadingly. "I love him, Nance. And I believe he loves me too. Have you ever stopped to think Father may not have always been right? He ruined our lives after Mother and I think we

both know that's not what she would have wanted."

Nancy slackens her hold on him and sinks down thinking of her mother.

He can hear more Hunters are running after him up the stairs now.

"She would have wanted us to choose love and kindness, not this obsession with hatred that Father has pushed on us. Please, let me do this for her."

Nancy lets him go and steps back. She pushes aside the three men behind her and lets Mike dart past. The balcony corridor is now abandoned, all the spectators that had filled it up previously had vanished as soon as Mike had killed the chief. Down in the hall, Will has his hand buried in a Hunter's chest, he grins in a twisted excitement. He notices Mike watching him and drops the man and runs for the post supporting the balcony, climbs up it and vaults over the bannister. He doesn't break a sweat and takes a fresh breath of happiness.

"You're not holding back now are you?" Mike asks.

Will chuckles. "Not at all. This is the most fun I've had in centuries."

Together they heave the doors to Dustin's smithing chamber open and slip inside. Will pushes a rack of freshly made battle axes in front of the door with a hand.

“What in the heavens is going on, Mike?!” Lucas snaps. He shoots a murderous look at Will. “What is *he* doing here?”

“I’ll explain later I promise but we need to leave right now. Right now!”

There’s a deafening bang against the door and the makeshift barricade rattles. It won’t hold for long. Lucas looks between them like they’ve both gone mad.

Dustin, however, springs into action and starts pulling out freshly smithed crossbows and packs of bolts.

He runs towards the window at the back of the room and swings it open. “Max, ready the horses!” he shouts.

“Please, brother. You don’t have to trust him but trust me.” Mike whispers softly into his friend’s ear as he clutches Lucas’ arm and bumps their shoulders together.

Lucas nods.

Mike smiles and nods and goes to walk past him to the weapons Dustin has now laid out for them but Lucas stops him.

“But I do want an explanation.” He tells him. “If you run astray I won’t be scared to desert you.”

“You will get your explanation.” Will interjects.

Lucas replies with a grunt and reaches past him to pick up a battle axe from the rack.

“I give my most sincere thanks for your help.” Will says.

Lucas ignores him and makes a show of putting his axe over his shoulder. “This doesn’t mean I am your ally, vampire. My axe will still taste demon blood without hesitation.”

Lucas walks over the window and climbs out of it.

Dustin approaches Will, happy as ever and hands him a crossbow and pouch. “You’ll need this.”

Will looks at it completely stunned and holds it as far from himself as he can.

Mike gives him a sorry look, takes it from him and they run to the window together. Mike offers his hand to Will but Will just smirks at him and with a flash of bats he’s on the ground below, he holds out his arms.

Mike chuckles, flabbergasted at him. "Show off." He says under his breath before jumping out of the window into Will's arms below. Mike looks up into Will's sparkling red eyes, they hold playfulness and a sense of pride and mischievousness.

There's a pop and Will breaks into a run, the dark very early morning sky and its grisly clouds blur out as they zoom by, leaving Will right there clear and celestial.

Suddenly they stop in front of the stables beside Lucas and Dustin loading their gear onto their horses and Max sat up on her horse, which she almost falls off when Mike and Will appears to dissolve out of nowhere.

"What the hell?!" Max yelps.

Lucas shrugs. "Leave now. Questions later." He grunts.

Will lets Mike down onto the ground and together they mount the last with Will squeezing on back with his arms wrapped around Mike's thin waist. The five of them ride off through the shrubbery away from the castle and towards the gap in the cliff edge.

Will gets his first look at the Hawthorn Castle turning over his shoulder, it looms on the edge of a beach with a great round tower in the centre and turrets standing sharp around the light. A slam rockets through the air as the front doors swing open and hunters pounce out firing arrow after arrow at the backs of their head. The



five of them duck and felt thankful for the woosh as they passed overhead.

“They’re firing at us.” Max gasps as they lean forward and urge the horses to go faster.

“Yes, brilliant insight, Max! Really helpful.” Lucas says.

Clacking hooves against the hard rock they disappear through the cliff edge and upwards into the haunted redwoods above, taking all of the Hunters hope of following them away.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

soooo theres a bit of action for you. also it was so satisfying to have will kill billy

hope you enjoyed! feedback is rlly appreciated

### **Author's Note:**

thank you sooo much for reading this! i rlly hope you liked it!

i dont think i've ever worked so hard on a fic, doing research and world building and so and so forth. and i wrote so much i've had to split the first chapter into two parts! it's definitely come out as my fic i'm most proud of and i'm hella hyped to continue it!

hope you like it and please give kudos and comments with all kinds of feedback they mean so much! thanks <33

(ps- the lyrics for the title and summary is the opening verse from sharon needles' song dracula. check it out its a bop and its one of many sharon songs i listened to on repeat whilst writing it!)